

ON SET WITH THE SUICIDE SQUAD
DC's most wanted on why it's good to be bad



THE
WORLD'S
No.1
SCI-FI
MAGAZINE

STAR WARS



138

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ABOUT....**



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POTTER**

Why we love JK Rowling's boy wizard

EXCLUSIVE!
**STAR
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Zachary Quinto on his third
tour of duty as Spock

STAR WARS

THE FORCE AWAKENS, ROGUE ONE, EPISODE VIII... AND BEYOND

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Michael Fassbender plays the game for real



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Rekindling the magic of Harry Potter's world



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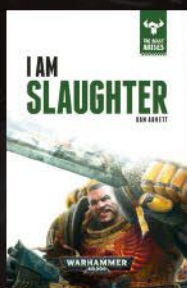
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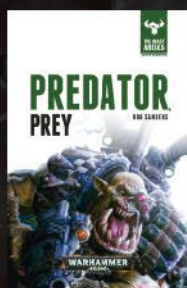
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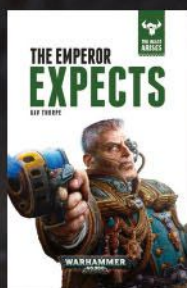
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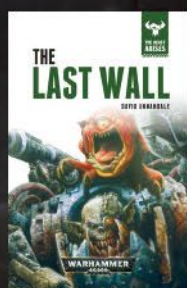
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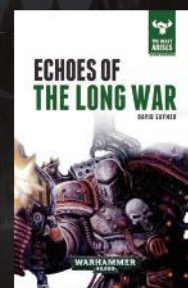
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BOOK 7





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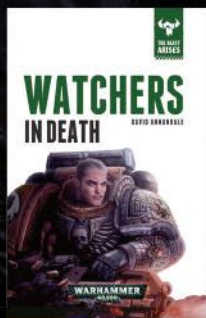
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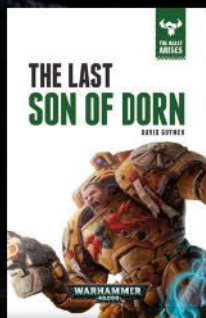


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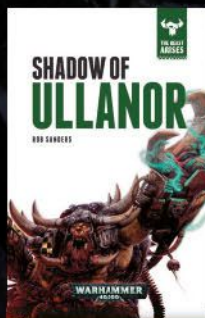
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**STAR WARS**

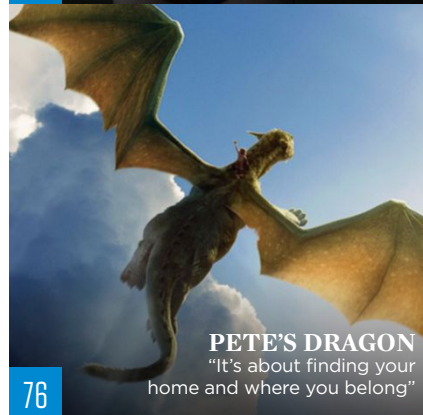
"Vader Lives!" graffiti was even sighted"

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**SUICIDE SQUAD**

"Fans are going to be surprised how faithful it is to the DC canon"

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"It's about finding your home and where you belong"

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You wouldn't want to run into them in a dark alley – it's DC's band of ragamuffins about to mess up the big screen soon.

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How do you turn a three-minute short into a movie? Like this.

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Our Hot Topic is spoilers, and there's much else very warm too!

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Was the follow-up worth waiting two decades for?

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Not that we want to get you down, but "death" is this month's subject.

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Check out p40 for details

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Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE SFX HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

→ I'm really excited about the new *Star Trek* TV series – love the idea of one story being told across a whole season. A great way to shake up the format.

→ Just discovered *Kung Fury* on Netflix. One word: Triceracop!

RANTS

→ Please, please tell me that *Transformers 5* is a late April fool.



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

→ Currently reading *How Star Wars Conquered The Universe* by Chris Taylor, a fresh, sometimes sideways look at the phenomenon. Recommended.

RIP

→ Sad to hear of the passing of Janet Waldo, the voice actor behind the immortal Penelope Pitstop (my first ever crush).



IAN BERRIMAN REVIEWS EDITOR

RAVES

→ Went on set for *Crazy Face*, the new series from Howard "Misfits" Overman. Looks promising!

→ Very amused by the new *Doctor Who Cookbook* (out 11 August). Will someone bake me a Zygon pie? I'm too lazy.

RANTS

→ Not overjoyed that Matt Lucas's Nardole is back in *Who*.



JOSH WINNING NEWS EDITOR

RAVES

→ I had no fingernails left after watching *Lights Out* – I haven't been that scared in the cinema since Black Phillip danced with the devil in *The Witch*.

→ Shoot me, but I enjoyed *Independence Day: Resurgence*. Big, dumb and great on an IMAX screen. But let's leave it there, eh?



RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES

→ Enjoyed reading the revised reissue of *The Target Book* on holiday in Tenerife. Relaxing.

→ Also been perusing Ian Fryer's *The Worlds Of Gerry And Sylvia Anderson*. Used to love those shows when I was a nipper.

RANTS

→ Had to buy my third flipping Blu-ray player in two years! Aargh!



JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

→ Super excited to see the excellent Mark Rylance as the BFG.

RIP

→ Sad to hear of the passing of Robin Hardy. Remember him being a good sport when we asked if he could recreate Christopher Lee's famous *Wicker Man* pose for an SFX photo shoot back in the day.



CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK ART EDITOR

RAVES

→ Loved *10 Cloverfield Lane* – great tension and Goodman was ace.

→ *Wreck-It Ralph* is getting a sequel – yippee!

→ Pleased *The Girl With All The Gifts* looks to have a different take on zombies. I'm intrigued.

RIP

→ So sad about Anton Yelchin.



WILL SALMON SPECIALS EDITOR

RAVES

→ Best season of *Thrones* so far and what a superb finale.

RIP

→ Only tangentially SFX, but Carol Morley's *The Falling* is a fascinatingly weird movie.

→ Robin Hardy – director of *The Wicker Man*. I shamelessly fanboyed him at a screening once and he was wonderful.



TARA BENNETT US EDITOR (EAST COAST)

RAVES

→ Basking in the anniversary nostalgia this summer of some all-time favorites: *Big Trouble In Little China*, *Aliens* and *Labyrinth* turn 30. I admit, that trio play a big part in what grown-up Tara does professionally today.

RANTS

→ What a bad summer for sequels.



ANDREW OSMOND WRITER

RAVES

→ *Independence Day: Resurgence* was stupid, but the visuals had a glorious feel of space-opera hugeness.

RIP

→ I saw a preview of *Trollhunters*, a promising-looking DreamWorks CG cartoon series; Anton Yelchin voiced the boy hero. Two days later, the news of Yelchin's death broke...



Star Wars is big. Really big. And we're not just talking about its unparalleled box office muscle. The galaxy that George Lucas created sprawls for light years beyond the seven (soon to be eight) live-action movies – and even though the post-Disney takeover Lucasfilm has reset the old Expanded Universe to create a new beyond-the-movies continuity, there's already enough new story to fill several Star Destroyers. So much, in fact, that it's difficult to keep up with all that's going on, even if you can already recite *The Force Awakens* word-for-word.

So we've pored through piles of novels, comics, reference books and more to give you an extensive guide to the key events, people (and aliens), and happenings in that galaxy far, far away. Think of it as a fun, fact-packed revision guide to enhance your enjoyment of *The Force Awakens* and the upcoming *Rogue One* (p42). If you wanted to know the names of Maz Kanata's house band, you'll be in heaven.

Slightly nearer to planet Earth, we've visited the set of *Suicide Squad* (p50), and we also preview the biggest sci-fi and fantasy movies coming your way over the coming months (p68). We'll be doing the same for the hottest new TV shows next issue (everything from *The Walking Dead* and *Red Dwarf* to *Arrow* and *Luke Cage*), so subscribe now (see p40 for details) to make sure you never miss an issue. Yep, the Force is strong with this one.

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEdwards

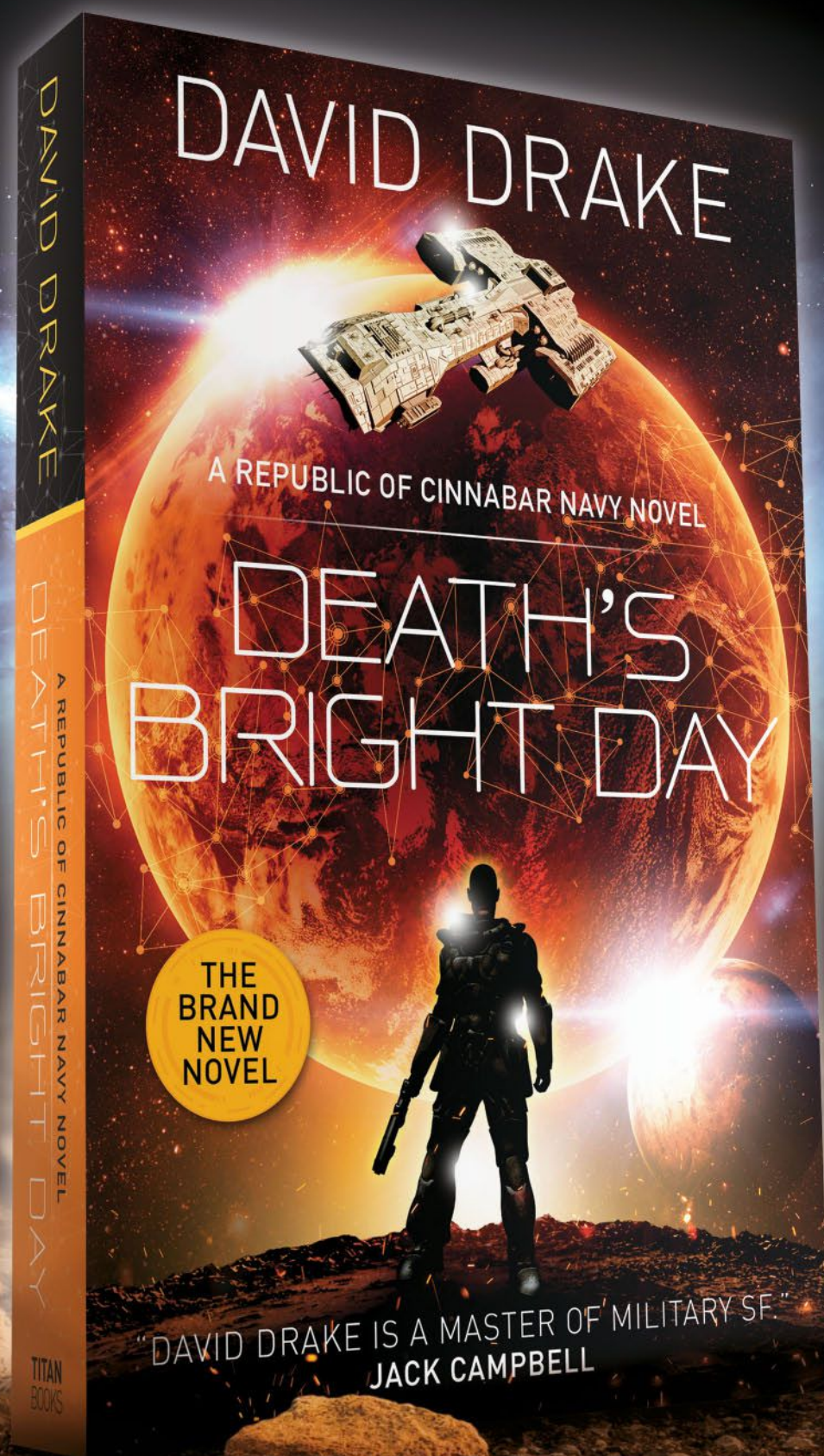
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on page
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RICH'S PICTURE BY OLLY CURTIS

"DRAKE COULDN'T WRITE A BAD ACTION SCENE AT GUNPOINT."

BOOKLIST



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→ NEWS //// INTERVIEWS //// INSIGHT //// BAKER → *edited by Josh Winning*

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

SHORT SHARP SHOCK

Director David F Sandberg
talks turning three-
minute short *Lights Out*
into a feature-length
frightmare...

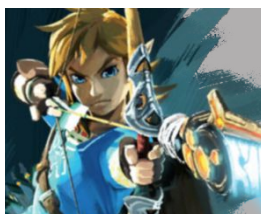
→ "It was just a year and a half ago that we got the phone call from Hollywood saying, 'The movie is happening, get on a plane,'" recalls director David F Sandberg, "so we just had to lock the door to our apartment and fly over here. We didn't even know where to live..." Sandberg's trajectory from making a terrifying three-minute short called *Lights Out* that went viral, to completing his first feature for Warner Bros with James Wan as the →

Highlights



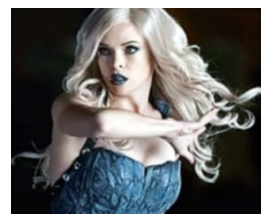
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→ Tod Williams on the task of adapting Stephen King's sort-of-zombie thriller *Cell*.



18 REBIRTH OF A LEGEND

→ Everything you need to know about the new improved *Zelda*.



19 SNOW BUSINESS

→ Five swift minutes with *The Flash* star Danielle Panabaker.

SCI-FACT! In the opening sequence, there's a doll on the shelf that looks like the creature at the end of the short.

“All these people from Hollywood started contacting us wanting to talk features”

producer, has been nothing if not rapid. And no one is more surprised than him. “In two weeks I start shooting *Annabelle 2*,” he marvels. “People keep telling me ‘don’t get used to this’, because it doesn’t usually happen this fast and this awesomely in Hollywood!”

Rewind to 2014 and Sandberg and his wife Lotta Losten decide they want to make horror movies in their native Sweden. But the Swedish Institute won’t provide funding, so they decide they’ll do it themselves on the cheap and upload to YouTube. They make their first short, *Cam Closer*, and then spot a competition which suits them perfectly – *Lights Out* is born. A no-budget, no-dialogue one-hander, it starred Losten as a woman turning off the lights to go to bed when she sees a figure in the corridor (also played by her). When she flicks the lights back on, the figure is gone. It’s scary as hell.

“It was just supposed to be a contest submission,” Sandberg explains. “We shot it in an evening after Lotta got off work and the idea was just: you turn out the lights at home and sometimes you think, ‘Is that a shadow? Is that someone standing there?’ And you have to turn the lights back on to check. But a few months after the competition the film just blew up online, got millions of views, and suddenly all these people from Hollywood started contacting us and wanting to talk features.”

MAKING THINGS BIGGER

One of the first to approach Sandberg was producer Lawrence Grey, who showed the short to *Saw*, *Insidious* and *The Conjuring* director James Wan. Sandberg expanded his idea into a 15-page treatment for a narrative feature, which he worked on with writer Eric Heisserer, and the feature came alive.

“The treatment is very much like the film,” Sandberg says. “The biggest difference was James’s influence. In my original idea Diana [the monster] was more of a demon. It was a little bit more of an arthouse horror in that it was about depression. When James came on board he said it shouldn’t be a demon, that it should be more of a ghost, a character the mum knew when she was younger. We still tried to retain as much as possible of this connection with depression and mental health.”

With an opener that stays very faithful to the short (including an appearance by Losten),

The film could well be the scariest in yonks.



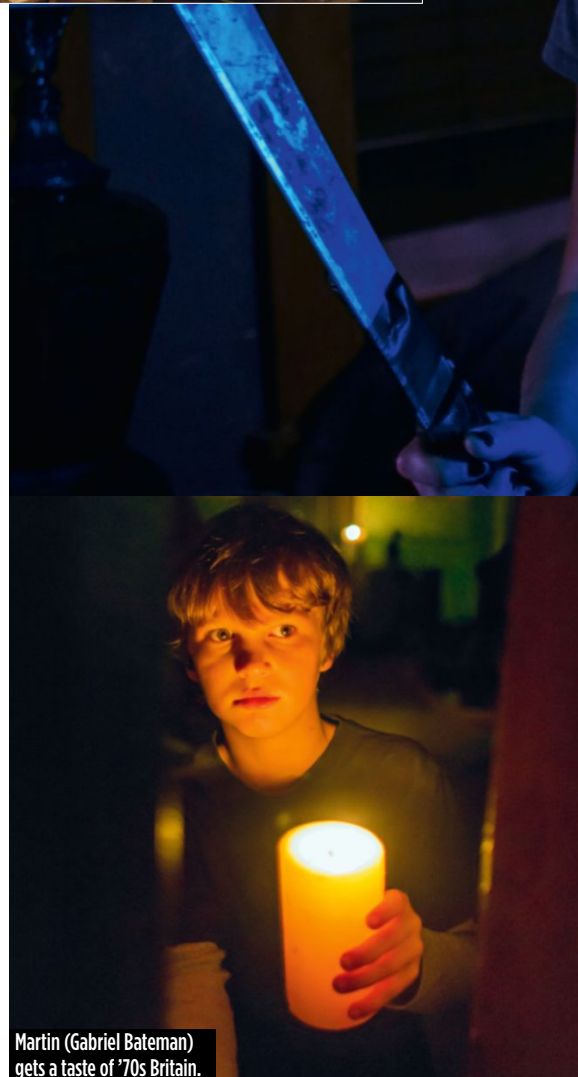
Lights Out expands into a story of a troubled woman with an “imaginary friend” who begins to affect her children’s lives. Maria Bello stars as the mother, with Teresa Palmer her estranged daughter who has to reconnect with her family for the sake of little brother Martin (Gabriel Bateman). It’s packed with jump scares and some very effective uses of the “lights on/lights off” dynamic.

“Before I even wrote the treatment I wrote down all these sequences, like, ‘This would be cool to do, this would be cool to do,’ one of those was firing a gun and her blinking out, another was the car headlights [flashing past], I wrote down all these fun things to do and we just put it into the movie,” Sandberg explains.

It means there’s plenty of scope for a sequel if the box-office figures for the first film are healthy enough. Next up though, Sandberg begins work on *Annabelle 2*, the sequel to the spin-off to Wan’s *The Conjuring*. “This isn’t a straight-up sequel to the first one,” he says, “it’s sort of a separate thing, which felt really nice when it’s a sequel but you can still make it your own. It doesn’t follow straight after the first film. It’s a period piece. I’ve always wanted to do a period piece and it’s a bigger budget so we’re shooting it on a sound stage and we’re building all these sets which is awesome.”

Though he knows his experience is unusual, Sandberg is heartened by the volume of shorts he’s been sent since *Lights Out* took off. “I don’t know if it’s me not watching enough horror shorts before but it feels like a lot of people got inspired by *Lights Out*,” he says. “It’s never been easier to make a movie or a short for no money at all and still have it look quite professional and quite good. It’s an amazing time to be a filmmaker.”

Lights Out opens on 19 August.



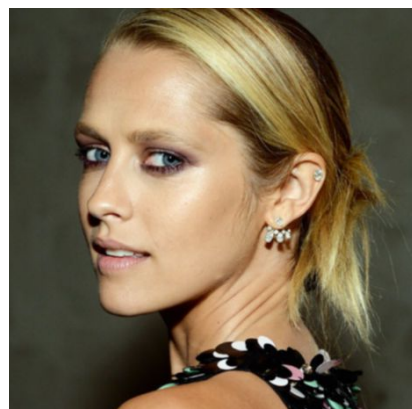
Martin (Gabriel Bateman) gets a taste of '70s Britain.



Rebecca (Teresa Palmer) is going to need more than a herbal tea.



Lighting bills on the movie were certainly kept low.



INTO DARKNESS

Teresa Palmer ain't afraid of no ghosts...

Rebecca isn't a typical Final Girl or a warrior. What do you like about her?

→ I love that she's so far removed from who I am, though I could really relate to her – my mother also has schizoaffective disorder, so it was me and my mum growing up. I could see how someone else in that situation could fall into this world of darkness and carry this dark energy with them. Rebecca very much pushes people away, doesn't trust anyone. I kind of had the polar opposite experience where I wanted to be close with everyone.

The idea of a monster appearing in the dark is a great concept...

→ It's pretty simple, if you think about it, this innate fear we all have of the dark. I certainly had it as a child; I had it up to when I was a teenager, actually. I slept in my mum's bed for the longest time because I was petrified of being alone in my room. The thing you see in the corner which is actually just a stand with a couple of umbrellas, it's the wolf man coming to get you or the Mothman.

It's David Sandberg's first feature film. What were your impressions of him?

→ I love him, he's the most gentle spirit. He's very calm, his energy's never wavering, it's always really stable. That kind of energy set the tone for the cast and crew, which was wonderful. It never felt stressful, even if I knew we were running out of time. I never felt that anxiety the way you do on other movies because he was just so relaxed about it all. And it was his first movie!

Was it difficult working with the light effects?

→ Not really. It was quite interesting, I've never been on a film where there were the least amount of lights possible! Usually it's the opposite, you're trying to light everything. It was cool, so shadowy and dark and it made for this intimate feel among the crew and cast. Everything was practical, even Diana. The girl who played her, Elisha, she was my stunt double on *I Am Number Four*! She was really able to contort her body in ways that meant they didn't need to use CGI. I was petrified watching the way she could bend and move. She was really horrifying.

SCI-FACT! A *Cell* adaptation almost happened much sooner with *Hostel*'s Eli Roth originally set to direct back in 2009.

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

MOBILE MAYHEM

Director Tod Williams tells us about destroying the world on a budget in *Cell*



We live in an "always on" world.

We get up, check our Twitter and email. We text our friends. We take selfies and share every intimate detail. For *Cell* director Tod Williams, it's all a bit of a nightmare.

"*Cell* was sent to me with John Cusack already attached and that was something that really attracted me," says the director, previously best known for directing *Paranormal Activity 2*. "And I began to feel more and more strongly about the concept, more personally connected to it and the thinking around connectivity and how it's kind of a horrible, terrible thing in many ways... There seems to be a belief that connectivity is automatically good. I'm not sure that's what we're put on Earth for."

Based on the 2006 novel by Stephen King, *Cell* is the story of Clay Riddell (Cusack), a graphic novelist who touches down at Boston airport when a mysterious pulse is triggered that turns everyone around him with a mobile phone into a blood-crazed psychopath. He joins forces with two other survivors, Tom (Samuel L Jackson) and Alice (Isabelle Fuhrman), and together the trio search for sanctuary. Yes, it's a zombie film, albeit one with murderous "Phoners", rather than hordes of shambling undead.

Shot in Atlanta in 24 days, and "very, very Romero in spirit", Williams says it was a challenge to avoid straying into territory covered by a certain popular TV show that also films there: *The Walking Dead*. "We were aware of them," he nods. "You can't point a camera anywhere in Atlanta that hasn't been filmed. You can't even find extras who don't know how to do the zombie walk! If anything we had to un-train them to make them be Phoners. So we were trying to avoid that stuff as much as we were trying to find the language of it."

Guns don't kill people, cellphones do.





“Connectivity is kind of a horrible, terrible thing in many ways...”

But what of Stephen King? The horror master himself co-wrote the script, “and he’s got approval over every element of [the film],” reveals Williams. “He’s earned that and you’d want him to have it.” And while the director is adamant that it wouldn’t be possible to film “95 per cent of an 800-page novel”, Williams believes that the film remains true to the original.

“Stephen wrote this in 2006 and set the opening scene in a park,” he explains. “At the time it was about how phones are invading even the most pastoral moments. By the time we made this, the world had gone way beyond that.” Hence the spectacular airport sequence teased in the trailer that replaces the novel’s original opening rampage.

“The things described in the book’s opening scene were well beyond the realms of the possible for our film,” Williams admits, “but there was a prominently featured ice cream truck in that scene and we bring that back in a different way. The ice cream truck is kind of a King-ism, and as we’re finishing the movie I see his new book comes out and there’s a killer in an ice cream truck in it... [laughs]. So I feel like we identified the right object!”

Cell opens on 1 September in the UK.



“And Simon says... stand up!”

“DON’T QUOTE ME”
“HOW THE F**K DO YOU WRITE SO MANY BOOKS SO FAST?”

George RR Martin is in awe/envy of Stephen King.



AERIAL ASSAULT SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ Animated series **Ghostbusters: Ecto Force**, set in 2050 and following a new gang of ‘busters, will air in 2018.

→ Sean Bean’s **The Frankenstein Chronicles** will return to ITV for a second series.

→ Sky is bringing back paranormal drama **The Enfield Haunting** as a series of standalone specials.

→ **Orphan Black** has been renewed for a fifth and final season.

→ Crime-fighter **Wild Dog** will appear in the next season of **Arrow** played by Rick Gonzalez.

→ Nick Zano (TV’s **Minority Report**) has signed on to play Citizen Steel in **Legends Of Tomorrow** season two.

→ Season three of **Penny Dreadful**, which just finished airing in the US, will be its last.

→ **Gotham** has cast Jamie Chung as Vicki Vale’s aunt.

→ FX has renewed **Archer** for three more seasons.

→ **The Terror**, based on Dan Simmons’ bestseller, will air on AMC in 2017.



Bryan Fuller at this year’s 42nd annual Saturn Awards.



CREATOR EXCLUSIVE

STILL BOLDLY GOING

Showrunner **Bryan Fuller** on his new series of *Star Trek*...



Few science fiction events are as anticipated as Bryan Fuller’s *Star Trek*. The first iteration since

Enterprise set in the franchise’s original “Prime” universe, the show will cap *Trek*’s 50th anniversary year, debuting on the CBS All Access website in January 2017. Its creator tells Red Alert he’s looking forward to taking *Star Trek* once more where no one has gone before...

“The thing that’s exciting,” says Fuller at this year’s Saturn Awards in Burbank, “is carrying on the progressive tradition of *Star Trek*. What we have to do is tell stories in a different way, a modern way. That’s a big indicator of where we’re going in terms of style and storytelling.”

Fuller adds that the show’s online format, a first for *Trek*, will enable him to carry out his mission: “We’re not subject to Broadcast Standards and Practices, so CBS All Access told us they’d like content that’s adult-oriented. We don’t want to do a show that doesn’t feel like *Star Trek*, but there are certain liberties we’ll be able to take advantage of.”

Although some fans have asked that Nathan Fillion play *Trek*’s next captain, when we ask Fuller about it, he suggests the casting will be as unorthodox as the show itself. “Since *Star Trek* has had the most ethnically and culturally diverse cast from the get-go, we want to continue that tradition,” he teases.

Star Trek premieres on CBS All Access in January 2017.

SCI-FACT! Anton Yelchin was actually Russian-born, unlike original Chekov Walter Koenig.

1989-2016

ANTON YELCHIN

As the world mourns the young Chekov, *SFX* remembers an actor taken long before his time



This year continues its extraordinary tally of taking the great and the good away from us by adding 27-year-old Anton Yelchin to its list – just one month before the release of *Star Trek Beyond*, the third film in the franchise that made his name.

As the teenage navigator on the USS Enterprise, Yelchin stepped into the shoes of *Star Trek*'s original Pavel Chekov, Walter Koenig, in 2009 and brought a wide-eyed wonder to the bridge. His charismatic performance – not to mention his outrageously enthusiastic Russian accent – made him a fan favourite and helped to bring him to the attention of Hollywood. Although, given that Yelchin had been acting since the age of nine and appeared in *Terminator: Salvation* as Kyle Reese, no less, in the same year as *Star Trek* was released, he was already a rising star.

Yelchin was born in 1989 in what was then Leningrad and is now St Petersburg, moving to the United States when he was six months old with his parents, who were figure skaters. When he didn't show much inclination to follow in their footsteps on the ice, they sent him to acting classes and he started getting parts in television shows such as *ER* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. His first big sci-fi role was in Steven Spielberg's *Taken* miniseries in 2002, and large parts in *Fright Night*, the brilliant *Odd Thomas* and excellent indie vampire film *Only Lovers Left Alive* kept him on *SFX*'s radar. He also wowed critics in violent drama *Green Room* in May, alongside Patrick Stewart.

Yelchin was in his driveway when his Jeep rolled backwards down the slope, crushing him. A known fault in the vehicle's gearshift, which hadn't prompted a recall from Jeep, is being blamed and a \$5m lawsuit has been filed against the company for other suspicious deaths.

The actor's friends and colleagues left many moving tributes for him. "He was a lovely young man, a gentleman," said Spielberg, while Zoe Saldana talked about Yelchin's "beautiful spirit". But JJ Abrams made collective chins wobble when he said: "Anton, you were brilliant. You were kind. You were funny as hell, and supremely talented. And you weren't here nearly long enough." We agree. ●



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CAPTAIN MARVEL

So who's this character fronting the MCU's first female-led film?

PASS THE PARCEL

☛ You'd think that with a name like Captain Marvel the character would be Marvel's signature hero, but he/she has had a fragmented history with at least seven different men and women going by that name. The original Captain Marvel wasn't even published by Marvel. He was created by Fawcett in the '30s, but DC sued, claiming the Captain was too similar to Superman. Later the character rights went to DC but by then Marvel had copyrighted the name.

CAPTAIN MAR-VELL

☛ Marvel's first Captain Marvel was created by Stan Lee in 1967. He was a Kree soldier, Captain Mar-Vell, sent to Earth as a spy but who instead becomes a friend of humanity's. He would eventually become the star of Marvel's first ever graphic novel; a dubious honour since it was called "The Death Of Captain Marvel", and he's one of the few comic characters never to have been resurrected.

MEANWHILE...

☛ ...A young woman called Carol Danvers, head of security at the company where Mar-Vell worked on Earth under a pseudonym, is caught in the crossfire in a battle between the Captain and his Kree enemy Yon-Rogg. When there's a big radioactive explosion, Mar-Vell shields Danvers to save her. Watch this space.

THE NEXT GENERATIONS

☛ After Mar-Vell's death, a rag-tag bunch of pretenders took on the name. In a rather progressive move, the first was a woman, Monica Rambeau, but she had no connection with Mar-Vell at all (and very different powers); she was practically leaping into a



dead man's shoes. After she was renamed Proton (and later Pulsar), a number of characters took the "Marvel" name, including a clone created from Mar-Vell, plus a Skrull sleeper agent, and a member of supervillain team the Dark Avengers.

MS MARVEL IS BORN!

☛ Remember Carol? Turns out she absorbed Mar-Vell's powers in that explosion we told you about and became the super heroine Ms Marvel. She even becomes an Avenger on various occasions, which isn't all fun and games. There are periods of power-loss and alcoholism. And the less said about the time she spent in an alternate dimension with a man she gave birth to after he impregnated her against her will the better.

BECOMING THE CAPTAIN

☛ Eventually the Avengers convinced Danvers she really deserved the title Captain instead of Miss and, in Kelly Sue DeConnick's critically-acclaimed 2012 series, Danvers finally became one of Marvel's A-listers. Just in time for her to make her big-screen debut, but who'll play her? Word is Brie Larson (*Room*, *21 Jump Street*) is a favourite, while Marvel's eyeballing Jennifer Kent (*The Babadook*) and Niki Caro (*Whale Rider*) for the director's chair. Expect it in early 2019. ●

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

“I DON'T KNOW WHAT SQUIRREL GIRL DOES OTHER THAN BE HALF SQUIRREL, BUT I COULD BE HALF SQUIRREL.”

We're not sure if Marvel is planning a Squirrel Girl movie, but Anna Kendrick is up for the gig...



AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ **Preacher** has been renewed for a 13-episode second season.

→ Netflix has commissioned a new series of **Lost In Space** – it'll stream in 2018.

→ Alan Taylor will return to direct an unspecified number of episodes of **Game Of Thrones**.

→ Stephen Amell says season five of **Arrow** is “going to be fucking mean... and that's exciting”.

→ **Lynda Carter** will play the US President in season two of **Supergirl**.

→ Patton Oswalt, Megan Mullally and Constance Wu have all joined Hulu's anthology series **Dimension 404**.

→ Guillermo del Toro's animated Netflix series **Trollhunters** will feature the voices of Ron Perlman and Kelsey Grammer.

→ Chris Carter says he has a plan for an 11th season of **The X-Files** if anybody wants it.

→ Steven Moffat has admitted he “didn't enjoy” the last Matt Smith series of **Doctor Who** as much as previous years.

REX. GETTY

SCI-FACT! Dredd's gone up against the Predator before, in a 1997 miniseries from Dark Horse.

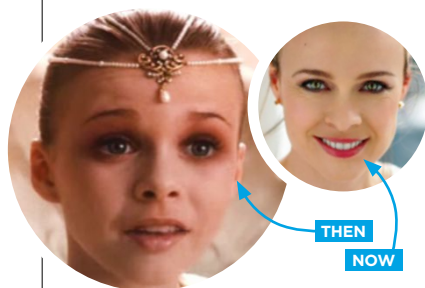


AFTERLIFE CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

119

TAMI STRONACH

*The Childlike Empress in
The NeverEnding Story*



Tami Stronach was just 11 years old when she was cast as the Childlike Empress in *The NeverEnding Story*, her first and only Hollywood movie production. Despite the film's success, Tami quit the movies to focus on a career as a dancer and has her own dance studio in New York.

Would you ever play the role again?

→ Part of the reason that playing the Childlike Empress was fun is that her inside and outside don't match. I don't know that, at 43, I'd want to play a child, but I'd love to be in a remake!

What would she be doing now?

→ She's in a different time zone than the rest of us, she lives in imagination; she's probably still sitting on a pillow!

Is there anything that was unfinished about her story?

→ No, but I like the idea that we have the power to change the world simply by thinking or believing something strongly enough.

Did you keep any set souvenirs?

→ I was supposed to get my dress but it never shipped to me. I got a bunch of Falkor stuffed animals and some funny little plastic figurines of characters.

Is there anything from the film you wish was real?

→ I wish Falkor was real. I wouldn't mind a ride!

What would it say on her gravestone?

→ Still Childlike.

Wonder what
the Paddy Power
odds are?



WRITER EXCLUSIVE

TRIPLE THREAT

Predator Vs Judge Dredd Vs Aliens

is the Cursed Earth crossover from hell...



Dark Horse is about to smash

together Judge Dredd, Xenomorphs and Predators in a new comic. Ol'

Stoneyface might not seem to have much in common with either of the extraterrestrial races, but as writer John Layman points out, they share, "one big similarity: violent sci-fi."

"Dredd's universe may be more exaggerated and satiric than the *Predator*/*Aliens* universes, but they're still a natural fit," he tells Red Alert, revealing that the characters first meet after a Predator ship crash-lands in an area of the Dreddverse's Cursed Earth where a rogue geneticist is running experiments. "Among the Predator's trophies is a Xenomorph skull, and the Xenomorph DNA that resides within it. Add to this Judge Dredd, and everybody's set on a collision course."

Illustrated by Chris Mooneyham, the four-issue miniseries will also feature the

psychic Judge Anderson, who can converse (in a way) with the normally not-too-chatty Predators. "She can understand them well enough to provide a rough translation," says Layman, adding that the story will visit "the Cursed Earth jungle known as the Alabama Morass and, of course, Mega-City One!"

Apart from acknowledging that he's referencing the IDW Dredd book and the previous Dredd/*Alien* and *Predator* crossovers, Layman is reluctant to pinpoint where exactly in Dredd's timeline the story takes place. "As far as I'm concerned, if you like Dredd, *Aliens* or *Predator* or all three of them, you can pick up the book and have fun without worrying about getting lost," he says. "The story is meant to stand alone, on its own, first and foremost." ●

Predator Vs Judge Dredd Vs Aliens #1 is published by Dark Horse Comics on 27 July.

SCI-FACT! *Zelda* is going sci-fi for the first time, with Link using tech-y gadgets.

GAME EXCLUSIVE

GAME CHANGER

The Legend Of Zelda returns with some big surprises in store...



The wires must have been digitally removed...

➔ Even the casual player will know that E3 week is the most important on the gaming calendar. For a few days in June the entire videogames industry descends on LA to show off their wares, which this year included two new consoles from Microsoft and a suite of new games from Sony, headlined by a reboot of *God Of War* and the latest from *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima.

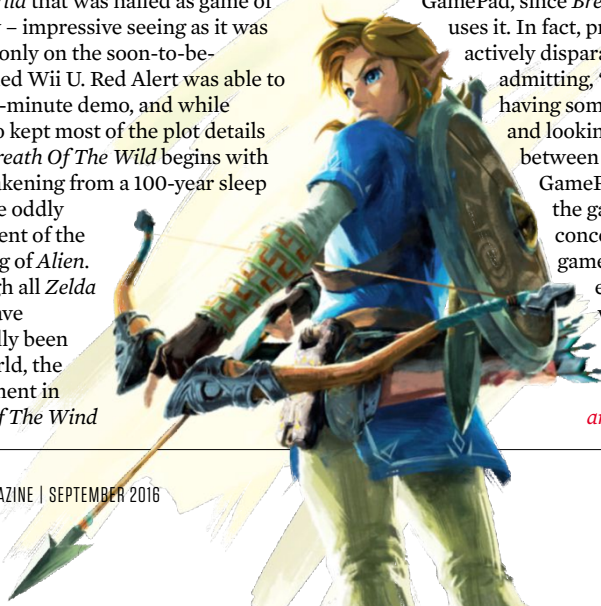
Despite the dominance of Xbox and PlayStation, it was *The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild* that was hailed as game of the show – impressive seeing as it was playable only on the soon-to-be-mothballed Wii U. Red Alert was able to play a 50-minute demo, and while Nintendo kept most of the plot details secret, *Breath Of The Wild* begins with Link awakening from a 100-year sleep in a scene oddly reminiscent of the beginning of *Alien*.

Though all *Zelda* games have technically been open world, the environment in *Breath Of The Wild*

is 12 times larger than any previous game, with an emphasis on non-linear exploration and tackling objectives in whichever order you want. Link can now climb almost any vertical surface and even has a specific jump button – something the series has always avoided before, in order to distinguish itself from a pure action game.

It will also be released on Nintendo's next console, codenamed NX. There was even a clue that the NX would not have a tablet-style GamePad, since *Breath Of The Wild* barely uses it. In fact, producer Eiji Aonuma actively disparaged the concept, admitting, "We realised that having something on the GamePad and looking back and forth between the TV screen and the GamePad actually disrupts the gameplay, and the concentration that the game player may be experiencing." A new world awaits... ●

The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild arrives later this year.



NEW AUTHOR

MARK DE JAGER

THE BANKER BEHIND *INFERNAL*, AN EPIC FANTASY THRILLER WITH AN INHUMAN ANTIHERO



Can you describe the world of *Infernal*?

➔ War has engulfed the two greatest kingdoms, a war that's grown more terrible with each passing year. Cities are being burned to the ground, their entire populations vanishing, and stories of unspeakable creatures are spreading too fast to be rumours...

What is your protagonist Stratus like?

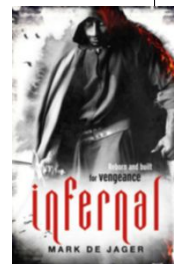
➔ Brutal. In modern terms we'd probably label him as some variant of a paranoid schizophrenic, save for the fact that he's absolutely correct in asserting that he's not human and is being hunted. He'll do whatever it takes to find the answers that will silence his inner demon, even if it means killing his way across the kingdom.

What was the initial idea that sparked the novel?

➔ I was watching random clips on YouTube. One was of a tiger in a zoo. The visitors were mucking about and treating it with complete indifference, but you could see that the tiger was watching them very closely. Waiting. I started wondering what it was thinking about, and it snowballed from there.

You spent time in the South African army – has that influenced your writing at all?

➔ The thing I took away from it was the bond that can form between strangers in extreme conditions, no matter how different their background was. It changed the way I looked at things.



Infernal is published by Del Rey on 11 August.

SCI-FACT! Panabaker signed on to *The Flash* knowing nothing about the comics.



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

DANIELLE PANABAKER

The Flash star talks Caitlin Snow, Killer Frost and season three

LET IT SNOW

☞ “I think at the beginning, Caitlin Snow was scarred from her experience with the particle accelerator explosion. But we’ve really seen her starting to come into her own.”

A FROSTY RECEPTION

☞ “Last season I finally got to suit up [as Earth 2’s Killer Frost]! It’s a little funny, as an actor, because so much of Killer Frost’s powers are done in special effects rather than stunts, so on the day it feels a little ridiculous at times, because I’m just shooting my arms out.”

YOU KNOW NOTHING, CAITLIN SNOW

☞ “I know nothing about season three yet, but I’m desperate to read the scripts! I think it’ll all depend on what happened with the timeline. We saw season one Barry disappear at the end of season two, so it’ll be interesting to see what that means for the characters.”

FLASH-FORWARD

☞ “My pitch for Caitlin in season three is that she and Robbie are happily married – if Barry changed everything up! It’d be nice to see her not have to go through any more relationship trauma.”

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

☞ “I think it was cool to see a little bit of discussion about Caitlyn’s mother on Earth 2. It really made me want to learn more about her mother on Earth 1. I would love for season three to open up her family.” ●

The Flash season three airs on Sky 1 later this year.

Red Alert Freeze Frame

Sept 2016

Top trailers dissected

SCI-FACT! Creator Jonathan Nolan calls the show "a dark odyssey about the dawn of artificial consciousness".

WESTWORLD

AIRING
AUTUMN
2016

HBO's new sci-fi series promises gun-slinging and gore galore...



↑ Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) sits naked in a lab. "Have you ever questioned the nature of your reality?" a man asks off-screen.



↑ A sweeping shot of dusty terrain introduces us to the Wild West, where Dolores has grown up as a farm girl. But is her life a lie?



↑ Among the residents of this Western town are Thandie Newton's Maeve Millay, who looks seriously no-nonsense.



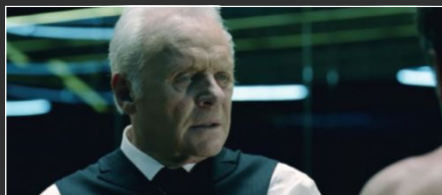
↑ Meanwhile, brooding under a fedora, Teddy Flood (James Marsden) is an archetypal cowboy through and through.



↑ Native Americans charge into battle, but are they the real enemy or merely a distraction?



↑ Enter menacing gunslinger The Man In Black, originally played by Yul Brynner in the 1973 movie *Westworld*, here played by Ed Harris.



↑ Turns out this West is actually a theme park created by Dr Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins), whose intentions seem less than pleasant.



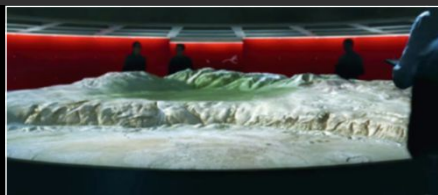
↑ As Dolores reveals she's "terrified" of what she is (echoes of *Ex Machina* here), we see blood running into her eye...



↑ Looks like there's been a full-blown, Wild West bloodbath. "There's something wrong with this world," says Dolores.



↑ A gun-toting Harlan Bell (Rodrigo Santoro) threatens a resident of Westworld, but who? And is he bad just because he's in black?



↑ A nifty camera move reveals a holographic miniature of Westworld, like something out of *The Hunger Games*.



↑ In a blink-miss shot, a robotic hand clenches into a fist. "These violent delights meet violent ends," warns Dolores. This won't end well...

The Buzz



RUSSELL I love this concept, as well as the original film, so I'll try and watch. Looks a bit dark and violent though, and the focus seems to not be on the tourists, which may be a mistake.



JAYNE This show has one of the best casts in years and the production values look movie-level! There's a real *BSG* vibe, too - this almost seems to be a Cylon parallel universe.



NICK Has the potential to be a timely take on the idea of an AI revolt. I can't quite shake the feeling Yul Brynner was *Westworld* but Ed Harris has the right kind of implacable chill, at least.



JOE I'm doubtful this will be the next *Game Of Thrones*. *Thrones* is based on a series of acclaimed novels. *Westworld* is based on... a dated '70s film? But Jonathan Nolan could surprise me.

SCI-FACT!

Tom Baker presented Yorkshire Television's *The Book Tower* for three series, from 1979 to 1981.



RED CARPET EXCLUSIVE

X-PLOSION

Writer-producer **Simon Kinberg** on the next mutant movies...

➔ While *X-Men: Apocalypse* marked the end of the second X-Men movie trilogy, writer-producer Simon Kinberg says the possibilities remain endless for Marvel's mutants on screen.

"If you know the X-Men comic books," Kinberg tells *Red Alert* at this year's Saturn Awards, "you know that there's hundreds, even thousands of other good storylines, some big storylines we haven't told yet, or storylines like *Dark Phoenix* that maybe we'd want to tell a different way. We're deep in the trenches of that now, but we have a sense of a few different areas we could explore."

Kinberg adds that the X-Men films will continue to jump forward in time, though perhaps not as much as one decade per instalment. With a "very loyal to the comics" New Mutants movie in development under director Josh Boone (*The Fault In Our Stars*), production on the spin-off *Legion* TV show underway (it airs in 2017), and *Gambit* set to start shooting by spring 2017, Kinberg is also overseeing *Deadpool 2*. The sequel to this year's fourth wall-busting blockbuster, he explains, has a secret weapon that will help it succeed where so many comedy sequels have failed in the past...

"There's no shortage of material that comes out of Ryan Reynolds's brain and out of his mouth," Kinberg says. "Reynolds was just born to play *Deadpool*. So we have the advantage of this guy who can just go forever coming up with fun new material." ●

Paul Magrs with the mighty Tom (it's pronounced "Mars", btw).



WRITER EXCLUSIVE

FUNERAL GAMES

New audio series ***Baker's End*** sees Fourth Doctor Tom Baker playing himself

➔ Former Doctor Who Tom Baker's imagination is being let loose in a new audio series, in which the actor plays... Tom Baker! After Paul Magrs wrote three *Who* audio series starring the actor, the two stayed in touch, trading "silly rambling stories" by email. From those have grown the punningly-titled *Baker's End*, which begins with Tom's funeral, after he fakes his own death...

"It's Tom playing Tom, involved in spooky earthbound mysteries," Magrs explains. "He's retired and trying to get away from fandom, but mysterious events pursue him into his everyday life in this village, Happenstance, where all the villagers are quite peculiar."

Who fans can expect the odd familiar reference. For example, episode three features a talking cabbage (Baker once infamously suggested the Doctor's next companion could be one). "It's a world 90 degrees to the stuff I've done before in *Doctor Who*," Magrs says. "There are very slanted nods to things – rather than Daleks running about we've got the old

ladies in the village becoming possessed and shooting lasers out of their tits! It's the anecdotal world that Tom always launches into dramatised, but with knobs on!"

It's also a follow-up to another classic Tom TV series, in which he encouraged reading. "It's more of a riff on *The Book Tower* [see Sci-Fact above], which was the spookiest thing I'd ever seen, aged nine," Magrs reveals. "Here goblins come to Tom in his dreams, and they're building a tower at the bottom of the garden that's going to be filled with all his books..."

The series also teams Baker with former *Who* companion Katy Manning (Jo Grant) for the first time. "They had this instant chemistry," Magrs says. "She becomes very droll and he becomes wilder and more exuberant! It's Tom exaggerated – which nobody ever asks him to do. Nobody says, 'Push it that bit further,' but we went there!" ●

Baker's End: The King Of Cats is released by Bafflegab Productions on 2 September.

WORDY WEEKENDER

Returning for its third year, **Gollancz Festival** promises to have your pages in a flap...

➔ **The UK's longest-running SF and fantasy publisher, Gollancz, is rounding up the cream of its creative crop for a weekend packed with otherworldly wonder.**

In association with your very own *SFX*, Gollancz Festival 2016 will take place over two days at Foyles, Charing Cross Road, with the likes of Scott Lynch, Joanne Harris, Elizabeth Bear, Joe Abercrombie and Ben Aaronovitch all in attendance (to name just a few of the 50 talented types making an appearance at the fest). They'll be participating in panel discussions, in-conversation events and, naturally, book signings, with each event broken down into a three-hour time slot, which are priced at £15 each. You'll also be able to nab books at a special discount festival price, in case your shelves aren't groaning quite enough already.

As well as the author-centric events, there's something for budding writers, too, with the Gollancz Festival Writers' Day taking place just across the road at the Phoenix Arts Club. There, ensconced in one of the cosiest and most cultured bars in the capital, you'll get the chance to grill the agents and editors responsible for plucking the best SF fiction from obscurity, and you can hone your own masterwork at the speed workshoping session. (Keep your eyes peeled for Gollancz goody bags, too, which will be packed with collectable festival exclusives.)

Previous years have seen more than 800 book lovers descending on the festival, so be sure to snap your tickets up soon. And make sure you take advantage of the numerous digital events rolling out in the week leading up to the festival – interactive content will go live from 12 September in association with Hachette Australia and New Zealand, and you can use the hashtag #GollanczFest to connect with other attendees. It's going to be one big literary love-in. Really, what more could a bookworm ask for? ●

Gollancz Festival 2016 runs from 17-18 September at Foyles Charing Cross Road.
www.gollanczfest.com



Go and see Joe Abercrombie and you might be able to shake those hands.



DATE
17-18 September

LOCATION
Foyles, Charing Cross Road

DATE
28-31 July

LOCATION
Lulworth Castle, Dorset

PITCH PERFECT

Grab your tent, sun cream and wellies – **Camp Bestival** is back...



➔ **With a jam-packed schedule that includes live music, theatre, author talks and workshops, Camp Bestival is the festival to beat when it comes to throwing in everything alongside the kitchen sink.**

While artists like Fatboy Slim and Tears For Fears will be performing at the four-day event at Lulworth Castle, it's the wackier stuff we're into, and we're spoilt for choice. Live shows include *Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out*, *The Insect Circus* and (specifically for the kiddies) *Aliens Love Underpants*.

As well as that, there'll be workshops of the informative and tongue-in-cheek variety, with offerings including how to bring out your inner alien, write a children's book in a day, embrace your inner geek girl and travel to space (we imagine you'll need to bring your own rocket along for that one). Guests include Holly Smale, Scroobius Pip and Virgin Galactic director Stephen Attenborough. ●

www.campbestival.net

COMING UP

IN CONVERSATION

28 July

Young Adult guru Liz de Jager (*The Blackheart Legacy*) will be at Waterstones Covent Garden on 28 July.
www.orbitbooks.net

NINE WORLDS

12-14 August

Another year of gaming, cosplay, fandom, SFF lit and geek culture at the Novotel Hotel in Hammersmith. The event sees the return of Bifröst, the cabaret of comedians, DJs, poets and dancers.
<https://ninenworlds.co.uk>

MELKSHAM COMIC CON

27-28 August

Taking place at the heart of Wiltshire, this comic-loving con welcomes guests including John-Paul Bove, Mike Collins, Jack Lawrence and Lee Townsend.
<http://melkshamcomiccon.com>

FANTASYCON

23-25 September

Taking place at the The Grand Hotel and The Royal in Scarborough, this sea-swept convention will have guests including Scott Lynch, Frances Hardinge, Elizabeth Bear and James Smythe.
fantasyconbythesea.com

NOVACON 46

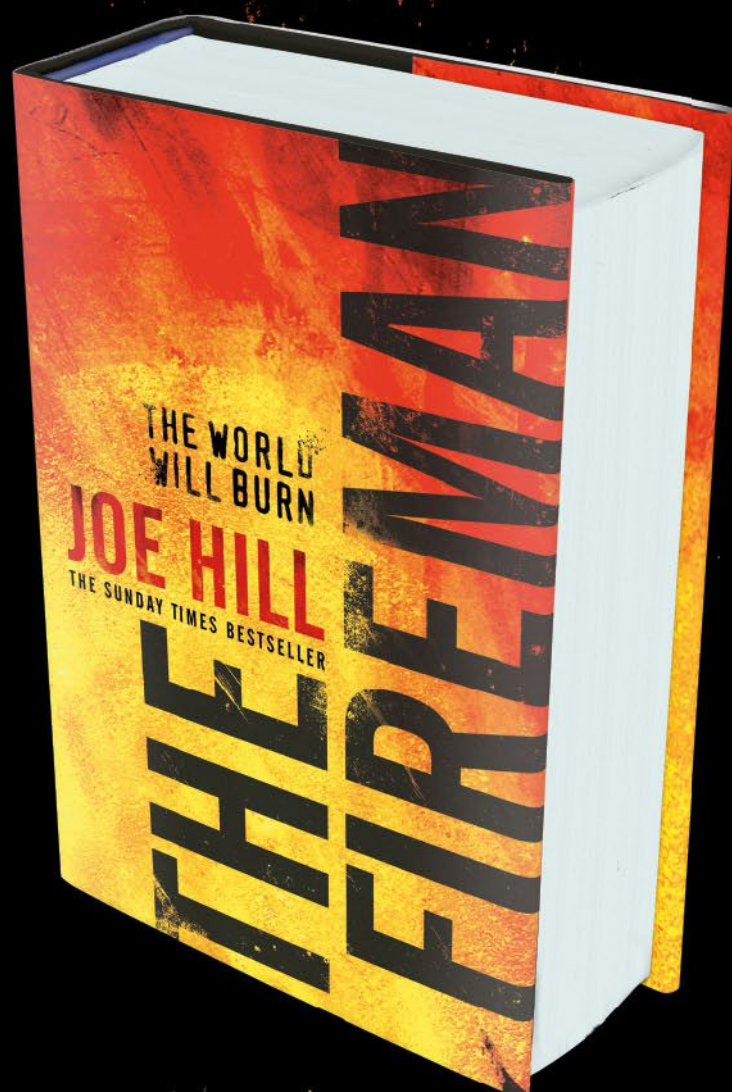
11-13 November

Nottingham's annual sci-fi literary convention returns – this year's guest of honour is *Thief's Gambler* author Juliet McKenna.
www.novacon.org.uk/n46

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of the year'**

— Sarah Pinborough

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or Waterstones.com



www.gollancz.co.uk

Red Alert Image Bank *Pick up your visual scanning*

SCI-FACT! *Cinema Alchemist* also features a blow-by-blow of the *Alien* chestbuster sequence. There will be fake blood...

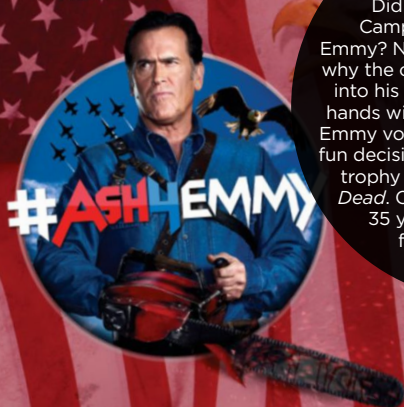


MASTER BUILDER

This never-before-seen shot from behind the scenes on *Star Wars* is just one of many being unveiled in *Cinema Alchemist*, a new book that charts the work of production designer Roger Christian. Out 26 July from Titan Books, it will reveal trivia like how Christian created the Millennium Falcon, the lightsaber and R2-D2 (the latter using a 10 shilling lamp top for a head).

VOTE FOR ASH

HE DOESN'T SUCK



BRUCE CAMPBELL
FOR OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES

STARZ

VOTE BRUCE!

Did you know that Bruce Campbell has never won an Emmy? No, NEVER. That's probably why the cult icon has taken matters into his own (chainsaw-wielding) hands with a campaign that invites Emmy voters to "make a terrible but fun decision" and finally chuck him a trophy for his role in *Ash Vs Evil Dead*. Come on guys, he's spent 35 years saving the world from the gibbering undead.



FEAR ITSELF

It's all getting a bit exciting over on *Fear The Walking Dead*. It has been enjoying a mid-season break since May, but it's set to return to AMC on BT TV with a (bloody) bang on 22 August. This is the first shot from the second half of the show's second season, and it looks like Nick Clark (Frank Dillane) is in a spot of bother. Here's hoping they have dry cleaning in post-apocalyptic Mexico.

SCI-FACT! Lambert became friends with Sean Connery on set and Connery helped with his Scottish accent.



NEWS WARP HIGH-SPEED FACTS

→ **Nicolas Winding Refn** wants to direct a *Batgirl* movie following Barbara Gordon.

→ **Wreck-It-Ralph** is getting a sequel! Directed by Rich Moore and Phil Johnston, it's due in March 2018.

→ **Peter Jackson** is currently working on a secret project with Steven Spielberg – no, it's not *Tintin 2*.

→ **Bryan Cranston** has joined the cast of *Power Rangers* as Zordon.

→ *Justice League* has cast Willem Dafoe as Aquaman hero Nuidis Vulko.

→ Hannah John-Kamen has joined the cast of *Ready Player One*.

→ Vampiric sequel *Stake Land 2* has already wrapped shooting with Nick Damici.

→ **Noomi Rapace** will appear in *Alien: Covenant* after all.

→ Marvel's animated *Spider-Man* movie has nabbed director Bob Persichetti.

→ TV's original Lois Lane, **Noel Neill**, has passed away, aged 95.

→ **Scarlett Johansson** becomes the highest grossing actress of all time.



ACTOR EXCLUSIVE



Now that's a sword that saw some action.

PRINCE OF THE UNIVERSE

Christopher Lambert talks *Highlander*'s 30th birthday, sequels and the proposed reboot...

➔ **"It's unbelievable," mutters Christopher Lambert**, reflecting on how a fantasy film he headlined in 1986 still enjoys such a reverential fanbase on its 30th birthday. "It deals with immortality," he shrugs, trying to explain its popularity. "When I read it in '85, all these people were going to plastic surgery – everyone wants to try to rejuvenate." Now more than ever... "I read an article a few months ago. Medicine is going so fast today that when you're 75, they'll be able to bring you back to 50. And by the time you get to 75 again, the scientists will be able to bring you back to 40."

Highlander cast Lambert as Connor MacLeod from the clan MacLeod, a 16th-century Scotsman who discovers he is one of a small group of immortals who must lop off each other's heads with huge swords, for there can be only one. He signed on before the producers realised he spoke little English ("I was raised on the French side of Switzerland.

When I met the producer, his face dropped: 'Holy shit, how are we gonna do this?')", trained with swords and a voice coach for 20 weeks, and barely spoke to Connor's arch enemy, the Kurgan, played by Clancy Brown, on set ("He wanted to stay in character"). It was worth it – the movie is a classic, somehow cohering into a satisfying whole while hopping between the medieval highlands and 1980s New York, fantasy and romance, with Queen on the soundtrack.

"When I was promoting *Highlander 2*, I kept saying, 'Listen, if you're expecting a sequel, then don't see this movie,'" he sighs of the franchise's plummet. "I said to the producers, 'It's ridiculous – they're coming from a different planet?!' *Highlander 3* was what number 2 should have been, though you can never replicate the magic of the original."

That said, the TV show (1992-1998) was "fun", and he has no problems with the long-planned *Highlander* reboot, saying, "You can re-do something, but don't try and copy." If they want him for a cameo, he'll do it, but he has no intention of playing the role of MacLeod's Egyptian-born mentor Juan Sanchez Villa-Lobos Ramirez, as portrayed by Sean Connery in the original. As far as Lambert is concerned, his *Highlander* legacy is assured... "It's now been three generations [of fans]," he laughs. "I have 12-year-olds in the street saying, '*Highlander*, it's so fucking great.'"

Highlander is out on Blu-ray, DVD and VOD now.

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

"I THINK ALL THE GREAT BATMAN STORIES ARE, AT THEIR HEART, DETECTIVE STORIES."

Ben Affleck hints what his solo Batflick will be like.





Nick Setchfield's

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future



WHAT'S UP THE WIZARD'S SLEEVE?

MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN

Move over, Doctor Strange! Or at least shuffle an inch or two sideways into the Astral Plane. Rival comic book sorcerer Mandrake the Magician is heading for the big screen in the improbable form of **Sacha Baron Cohen**. Yes, the man behind Borat and Ali G is set to play the

dapper, impeccably moustached occultist in a new Warner Bros blockbuster. The creation of Lee Falk, Mandrake first appeared in 1934, predating even Batman and Superman. A stage magician with a neat line in top hats and hypnotic illusions, he originally came to cinemas in a cliffhanging serial in 1939 and made the small screen in animated form in '80s fave *Defenders Of The*

Earth (all together now: "Master of magic, spells and illusion! Enemies crumble in fear and confusion! Mandrake!") Oh, come on, put some effort in...) *Tropic Thunder*'s **Etan Cohen** – no relation – directs.

INDY LIVES!

INDIANA JONES 5

Dispiriting news for deadl

snakes, vengeful Nazis and purveyors of archaeological death-traps everywhere: turns out Indiana Jones is officially as indestructible as his hat. "I think this one is straight down the pike for the fans," **Steven Spielberg** tells *The Hollywood Reporter* as he prepares a fifth bout of whip-snapping, globe-hopping action. "The one thing I will tell you is that I'm not killing off Harrison

[Ford] at the end of it." Guess that rules out **Shia LaBeouf** having a moody five minutes with a lightsaber... "It won't just be a one-off," promises Disney chairman **Bob Iger**. "Right now we're focused on a reboot, or a continuum and then a reboot of some sort. Well, we'll bring him back, then we have to figure out what comes next. That's what I mean. It's not really a reboot, it's a boot – a reboot." Coming 19 July 2019: *Indiana Jones And The Quote Of Wilful Obscurity*.

SWAT TEAM!

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

☞ Scott Lang's circumstances have not improved in the sequel. "He's a fugitive in most of the first *Ant-Man* movie," director Peyton Reed tells *Modern Myth Media*. "He's just a bigger fugitive now." We're not sure if this is a shameless pun on our hero's newfound giant-size schtick but one thing's certain: **Evangeline Lilly's** Hope Van Dyne – aka the Wasp – will be a true partner in peril. "It's something we're excited about," says Reed. "For me as a comic nerd, I always thought of Ant-Man and Wasp as a team and that's a lot of what the second movie is really about: how they work together, what their personal and professional relationships are like. To show her finally fully formed in this movie is really exciting... It's every bit as much her movie as it is Scott Lang's." As to whether **Michael Peña's** Luis and the rest of the Ant Hill Mob will return, Reed says "there's a fighting chance for that to happen."

LUNAR LANDER!

MOONFALL

☞ Unrepentant devastation junkie **Roland Emmerich** is plotting another imminent catastrophe for planet Earth. No, that Donald Trump biopic will just have to wait – this one's called *Moonfall*. Close analysis of the title uncovers the craftily concealed premise: it's the Moon, and it's falling, and it's falling on us. Panic in the streets! As Neil Armstrong's



→ Sir **Anthony Hopkins** joining **Tyrese Gibson** and **Laura Haddock** in *Transformers: The Last Knight...* **Dwayne Johnson** orbiting *The Wolfman...* Sony eyeing **Silver Sable** movie as part of their Spider-verse, with a script by *The Hour's* **Abi Morgan...** **Justin Lin** new frontrunner for live-action *Akira...* **Bokeem Woodbine** and **Michael Mando** joining *Spider-Man: Homecoming...* **Ansel Elgort** in the frame for *Dungeons & Dragons...* **Sophia Lillis** starring in *It...* '70s comic strip *Broom-Hilda* heading to the screen... **Eli Roth** teaming with **Jim Carrey** on *Aleister Arcane...* **Josh Radnor** directing parallel universe tale *Leaves...* **Giancarlo Esposito** joining SF film *Okja...* **Kellan Lutz** up for *Masters Of The Universe...* Atlas Entertainment and MGM optioning **J Michael Straczynski's** *Rising Stars...* **Brad Peyton** helming *Malignant Man...* **Mackenzie Davis** joining *Blade Runner 2...* **Jason Fuchs** writing the *Lobo* movie... **Brian Grazer** planning *Splash* remake... **Lisa Joy** writing *Battlestar Galactica...* Paramount prepping '80s horror comedy *Ghost Bros...*



“We'll bring Indy back, then we have to figure out what comes next”

footprints hurtle inexorably Earthwards only a handful of misfits can save the world. Possibly by building a giant baseball bat to knock our dear satellite chum back into orbit. With Bruce Willis taking the swing. You want ideas to goose up your blockbusters, Hollywood? We got 'em. Universal have picked up the project, pitched as *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* meets *2012*. Emmerich collaborated on the script with *The Day After Tomorrow's* **Harald Kloser** and *Extinction's* **Spencer Cohen**. Disaster fetishists got to stick together.

MORE MOON DOOM!

SEVENEVES

☞ Hey, is this open season on the Moon or something? Turns out **Ron Howard** is also looking to bring a lunar cataclysm to the big screen. Don't get a complex now, dear satellite chum... This one's an adaptation of Neal Stephenson's epic 2015 novel, which finds the Moon shattering, causing the inhabitants of Earth to flee to the stars. Five millennia later – and boy, we're looking forward to that title card flashing up – the descendants of humanity, now evolved into seven races, return to their homeworld to find the planet utterly transformed. Well, Brian Matthew is still on Radio 2, but apart from that, utterly transformed. Howard is teaming on the project with screenwriter **Bill Broyles**, who wrote true-life NASA tale *Apollo 13*. It'll be brought to us by Skydance Media, the production house behind the recent *Star Trek* and *Terminator* movies.

NAUTILUS BUT NICE!

20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

☞ Brace yourselves, people. We are about to reach peak Nemo. X-franchise supremo **Bryan Singer** is already committed to adapting Jules Verne's classic for Twentieth Century Fox. *The Wolverine's* **James Mangold**, meanwhile, is priming his own take for Disney, a movie that will explore the origins of the master of the oceans. Now our sonar readings reveal yet another Nautilus astern. *Silent Hill's* **Christophe Gans** will direct this one for China's Bliss Media. Intriguingly Gans plans to relocate Verne's tale to a Chinese setting and is reportedly chasing an East-meets-West visual aesthetic. He's already scouted Shanghai for potential location work and is looking to cast two Chinese actors in lead roles. Pre-production begins this autumn, just as Singer prepares his own plunge underwater. Anyone else fancy taking a crack at it? Plenty of room in the ocean...

HOWL SOON IS NOW?

WE'RE WOLVES

☞ Director **Taika Waititi** may currently be hammer-deep in the Marvel Universe, shooting the Asgardian apocalypse of *Thor: Ragnarok*, but he hasn't forgotten his lo-fi, laff-packed roots. Seems he's still keen to give us a sequel to 2014's vampiric mockumentary *What We Do In The Shadows*. "We want to do it, and we're coming up with story ideas," he tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "The first film took us about seven years to make, and we don't want to do that again. It's a lot easier now that we have all the characters, and we know how we want to do it, and know that we can do it." As the title not so subtly hints, the sequel will focus on the pack of lycanthropes we saw in the first film. "The same werewolf actors would come back," says Waititi. "It would basically be Rhys [Darby] and Stu [Rutherford] vying for position as the alpha male in the werewolf gang." The fur will fly... ●



Illustration by Paul Cemmick

//// SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN! ////

First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

IAN BERRIMAN,
REVIEWS EDITOR



Spoilers! No, come back – that's not a warning, just me

introducing a topic. We asked for your views on spoilers this month, and it's clearly a subject you feel passionately about. Hate 'em myself – especially as I am often utterly *rubbish* at keeping up with things. This can be a bit of a problem when your job largely involves reading reviews of things you haven't yet seen.... Argh! Anything else in the world of SF&F bugging you? Then feel free to share your pain – you can find all our contact details on the next page!

SFX Hot Topic Your views on the month's big issue

#SPOILERS

🔗 **Anthony Coombes, Facebook** I hate spoilers! I've seen the trailer for *Rogue One*, and now ignore every article about it.

🔗 **Joseph McCormick, Facebook** How hard is it to write the word "spoiler" before a sentence?

SFX Spoiler: not at all!

🔗 **Pete MacKenzie, email** At what point did the responsibility for avoiding spoilers stop being that of the spoilee? Back in the day, it was understood that if you wanted to avoid the outcome of, say, a football match, it was up to you to "look away now". Social media shouldn't negate that responsibility. Why spoil others' enjoyment of discussing something that's in the public domain? I came out of *The Force Awakens* on opening night desperate to discuss it, but couldn't because a vocal minority hadn't gone. How much of a fan are you if you didn't get to a midnight showing?

🔗 **Mike McGuckin, Facebook** Are we not allowed to talk about a movie or TV show until we're sure everyone in geekdom has seen it? If you really cared so much you'd be watching an episode at broadcast time.

🔗 **Tracey Stott, Facebook** I can't stay up until

3.00am to watch *Game Of Thrones*, then go to work in the morning! I wouldn't be able to concentrate.

🔗 **Michael Turner, Facebook** Ruining something people love just because you won't mark a discussion as a spoiler – or wait until the next day – is just selfish. If you need to discuss your "feels" so badly, get a therapist.

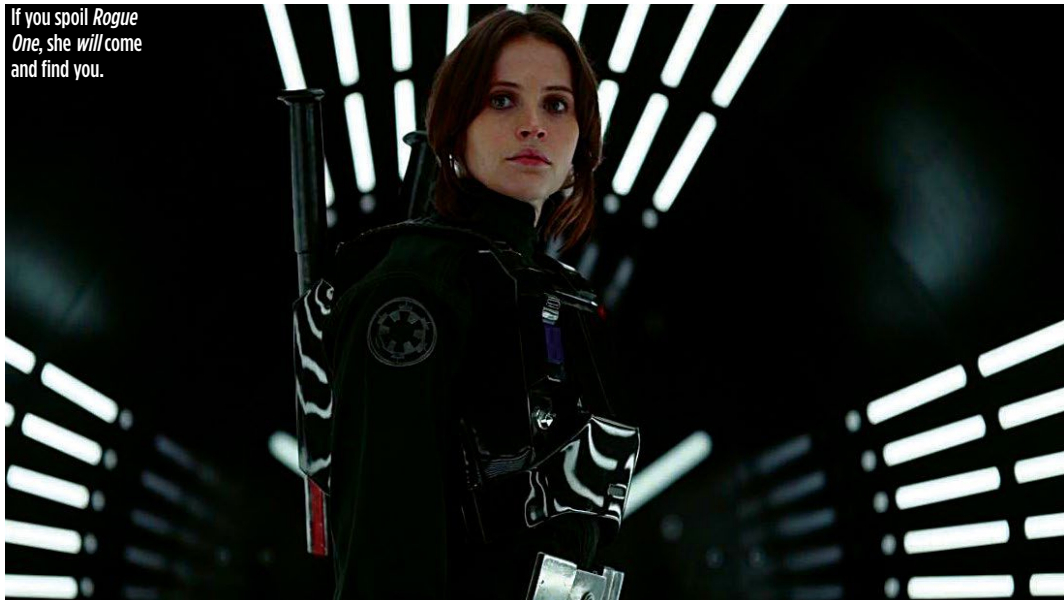
🔗 **Andy, email SFX**, I want you to go in-depth in reviews and not shy away from dissecting the meat and bones of a movie. If it's a film I'm about to see, I'm careful to only read the first half, jump to the summary and check the star rating. Keep the spoilers for the beer-belly of the text and tag it if you wish. Then I can get double the pleasure from returning after the popcorn's finished.

SFX It can be more difficult to section off spoilers than it sounds. Plus "spoiler flags" aren't a perfect solution – when turning a page, a reader's gaze can fall anywhere.

🔗 **Billy Edwards, Facebook** The type I most dislike are character deaths, because it really ruins the shock. But by the time it's out on DVD, it should be okay to discuss it.

🔗 **Vanessa, Twitter** I hate the double standard. You must keep schtum if it's in the UK first, but if it's in the US, it's fair game!

If you spoil *Rogue One*, she *will* come and find you.





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“For me, the journey’s more important than the ending”

🔗 **Gareth Williams, Facebook** Am getting a bit annoyed by the spoiler Nazis. People need to get organised and watch the thing they’re into. It’s not everyone else’s responsibility to protect you from spoilers!

🔗 **Cherry, email** I quite like spoilers! Sometimes I go looking for them, especially if the show is really tense. For me, the journey’s more important than the ending. Sometimes knowing where the story’s heading makes the journey better, as I can look for signs.

🔗 **Emmet O’Brien, Facebook** It annoys me that the *Planet Of The Apes* DVD cover spoils the ending. We have to think of the next generation.

🔗 **Raymond Cooper, Facebook** My favourite was the video case for *Doctor Who* story “The Time Warrior”. The synopsis even explained how the last episode ended!

🔗 **Peter Watson, Facebook** I had a plot point in *Captain America: Civil War* spoiled by a Pop! Vinyl figure, of all things!

SFX If it spoke to you, *Peter*, please visit your doctor immediately.



Do they look like they’re going to a birthday party?

#CRAPPY BIRTHDAY?

🔗 **Craig Waterworth, New Zealand**

September is fast approaching, and what’s being done to celebrate *Star Trek*’s 50th anniversary? Not much. A fan conference and musical tour, both in the States; a movie that has no direct connection to the 50th; and the promise of a new TV show that should have been aired this year, to mark a firm bond between the past and the present.

The new movie will be making multiple nods to the anniversary, but the global fanbase deserves more. There should have been a TV miniseries for fans to enjoy. This could have hinged around the work of Section 31. Thanks to their wibbly-wobbliness we could have had all the captains drawn together in a multi-dimensional, time-hopping epic that could have even included the *Star Trek Beyond* crew! It could have ended with a direct connection to the new TV show as well – a walk-on from the new captain at the end would have been a major cliffhanging tease to stoke people up.

Maybe it’s not too late and there’s a surprise televisual event brewing for later in the year... I live in deluded hope.

SFX Come on *Craig*, is this not

being a wee bit spoilt? We’ve got a new movie (we speak to Zachary Quinto on p60) and a new series in the pipeline – that’ll do me! Some kind of Trek-themed night on the telly would be nice, though.

#BATMAN AND GAROTTING

🔗 **Thomas Huartson, email** In your *Batman V Superman* review you said, “it’s criminal to create a movie that shuts out kids”. But there’s a worse abomination from the Batman canon: *Gotham*.

This is a show that inevitably draws in younger viewers to check it out. But it’s definitely not a show for kids. We get that Gotham City is a dark, gritty, ugly place, brimming with corruption, and that the villains are sadistic killers. But does the show have to keep hammering this home with graphic violence? Robin Lord Taylor’s Penguin and Cory Michael Smyth’s Riddler are effectively creepy without them butchering and garroting everyone.

It makes violence look stylish, and it’s been constantly proven through a series of tragic events that such violence can be imitated. To say that films and shows directly cause real-life violence wouldn’t be accurate or fair. But it →

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People have a habit of getting a bit ill on *Games Of Thrones...*



Gotham: not a city with a gushing guide book.

can be argued that they don't help the situation, especially with disturbed individuals.

Could it be argued that Gotham's portrayal of violence can be balanced with the moral actions and principles of its hero? Well, Jim Gordon coldheartedly shoots Theo Galavan in the head, so no! As a result Gotham comes across just like BvS – criminal.

SFX But there's nothing new about Batman being dark and gritty. What was shocking about Zack Snyder's movie was putting such a spin on Superman, whose universe is usually more sunny and hopeful.

#TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

🔗 **Gary Watson, Cramlington** Here are my ideas for the *Avengers: Infinity War* movies. 1) At the beginning, Steve Rogers is operating under a new identity – either Nomad or the Captain. 2) Ross loses the plot! After a failed attempt to capture Rogers and the others by invading Wakanda, he's relieved of his duties and – due to Thanos? – he becomes Red Hulk. Cue a clash between Green and Red! 3) Thor, Hulk and the Guardians of the Galaxy should appear. And Doctor Strange. 4) Doctor Strange helps

Scarlet Witch with her powers. 5) Captain Marvel appears. 6) So does Spider-Man.

SFX 7) So does Squirrel Girl. 8) Hold on, is that Stan Lee? 9) Shit! Galactus!

#SISTER ACTS

🔗 **Medium Atomic Weight, email** Having thoroughly enjoyed the frothiness of *Supergirl*, I'd love to have more female superheroes headlining their own shows. So I started thinking about which heroes I'd like to see and who should play them.

Batgirl was an obvious first choice. Kaya Scodelario-Davis has the no-nonsense attitude – or Isabelle Fuhrman could bring a kooky dark side to the role. I'd also love to see Eliza Taylor as Silver Sable, or maybe Elle Fanning as Stargirl. Then again, why settle for one heroine when you can have three with the dazzling DN Angels?

But my eureka moment came

with the thought of Gwendoline Christie bringing all the right attributes to the Savage She-Hulk. I'd pay good money to get that TV show green-lit (geddit?). Fancy going in 50-50, *SFX*?

SFX [Empties pockets] Er, I've only got £5.57 and a lolly stick, which probably isn't going to stretch further than a small pot of green poster paint. But I'm in!

#ON THE RHODAN AGAIN

🔗 **Richard Cotton, email** It was nice to see the item about *Perry Rhodan*

books in issue 275. I've been a great fan of these stories since when they first went on sale in the UK. I wish I could fill the gaps in my collection, but it would take some doing! They're a light read, but they're also a good read, and I think that they had a small part in why I try to write sci-fi myself.

🔗 **Russell Smith, email** Well, thank you very much – now I'm hooked on the *Perry Rhodan* books.

🔗 **A Hanna, Portadown** Loved

“I'd love to have more female superheroes headlining”

your *Perry Rhodan* feature! What about ones on EE Doc Smith's *Lensman* series, *Hook*, and the *Wild Cards* novels?

SFX Big response to this feature. Sometimes it feels like we've done a retrospective on every cultural product ever, so all suggestions gratefully received. (Though our Nick reserves the right to snort dismissively and toss them in the bin.)



#IT DISNEY MATTER

🔗 **Tom Morgan, email** I feel the need to spread the love for a TV show that's received next to no attention in the UK: an animated series on Disney XD called *Gravity Falls*.

It tells the story of twins Dipper and Mable Pines, who go to stay with their shyster Great Uncle Stan at his Mystery Shack, in a town where all sorts of weird things happen. It's brilliant – it tells a proper story, set over the summer break, from the first to last episode. It has plenty of in-jokes, brilliant characters, and is genuinely funny!

I watch it with my three-year-old daughter and we both love it, and it was bought to my attention by a 42-year-old man whose 13-year-old daughter felt the love for the whole shebang – so it's got something for everyone! It seems to have slipped under people's radar. Watch it, people – you won't regret it!



SFX I'd never heard of it, even though it's been knocking around for four years! There are so many genre shows now that it can be hard to keep track – I tried to count all the live-action ones recently and gave up at 30! In the midst of that deluge, are we failing to give due credit to any other hidden gems?

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

⚡ **Keith Tudor, Romsey** *Supernatural* season 11 remembered a lot of the fun that made this series great to watch. There are also plenty of in-jokes and pop culture references, as well as drama and pathos now and then. I feel the series works best with the standalone episodes, though – the angels and demons theme is starting to feel tired.

⚡ **Chloe, email** I was shocked and saddened to hear of the tragic death of Anton Yelchin. He was a great actor and a wonderful person, and will be missed by many. He gave a stellar performance as Chekov, and had a promising career in front of him. My thoughts and prayers go to his friends and family.

SFX Seconded. *Anton Yelchin really made the character of Chekov his own, and the circumstances of his death somehow made the news seem even more grim. He's great in Green Room too – if you get the chance to see that, grab it.*

⚡ **Mike Garner, Moorends** I find it incredible that *Legends Of Tomorrow* got a second season. It's bad for so many different reasons! It's just a mix of *Doctor Who* and something like *Quantum Leap*. Rip makes Shakespearian speeches, but with the words of a second-rate Stan Lee. Worst of all, they ruin one of my favourite characters, White Canary – she ends up just a sulky teenager with rage issues. Such poor writing! If you like *Legends Of Tomorrow* then please check out *SHIELD*!



Legends: not legendary?



KATHY TAYLOR OF VECTIS ON WHY COLLECTING IS WISER THAN EVER



→ It has always been fashionable to collect and in these times of Brexit uncertainty cash in the bank is arguably not a match for toys and collectables in your possession! There is a real pleasure in searching and sourcing elusive items to complement or feed an interesting and sometimes all-consuming passion.

It's all down to supply and demand, and the fluctuating ebb and flow draws parallels to stocks and shares. It's no longer a retail situation for all those childhood memories we used to covet and desire in the past – you need to hunt them out, sometimes in the most unlikely of places. It opens up a fascinating new world.

The vintage toy market worldwide is surprisingly large at £2.5 billion. It is also growing by a healthy 10% a year. There are 2-3 million core collectors out there that transact once a week and spend up to three hours a day on their hobby. Furthermore, toy collectors are highly networked – if you do something good for them they'll spread the message.

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item with a few words about what it means to you, to sfx@futurenet.com, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT.

SFX

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Loft clearance, Wales at the Euros, Iceland, American visitors, the Roman Baths, water park with sharks, beach massage, monkeys and camels, a bad Beatles tribute band

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"Forewarned is foreworried"

THE HAN SOLO MOVIE

Harrison Ford is being replaced by a younger model. But will we see him flying the Falcon? *Illustration by Paul Garner*

Wishlist

WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN UPCOMING MOVIES AND TV

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

HEY, CHRISTOPHER MILLER, PHIL LORD, LAWRENCE AND JON KASDAN... YOUR MOVIE BETTER INCLUDE ALL THIS STUFF!

TWO HANS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

1 Two words turned up in your replies more than any other: Harrison Ford. But how to crowbar the actor in, given *that* thing that happened (look, there's probably still one person who's somehow not seen it...)? Maybe he could feature in some kind of framing device, as **@JohnPhantom** explains. "It should start with Harrison Ford as the older Han Solo in a bar (maybe after Luke went into hiding, but before *The Force Awakens*) getting drunk with Chewie and reflecting on his life."

FIRST CONTACT

2 **Mark Lloyd** was just one of many who are keen to see the momentous coming together of two icons (the other being an incomprehensible walking carpet). "The first meeting with Chewie!"

THE KESSEL RUN

3 The Millennium Falcon made it in "less than 12 parsecs" – confusing the hell out of everyone who knows that a parsec is a

measure of distance, not time. But what is it, exactly*? Some kind of race? **Anthony Jones** is one of those eager to get some answers. "Kessel Run! Anything else and you're wasting our time!" (*Psst: we actually already know. According to AC Crispin's Han Solo books of the late-'90s, it's a smuggling route. But are those still considered canon?)

CLASSIC CHARACTERS

4 You just can't get enough of familiar faces from the original trilogy, it seems. **David Bickerstaff** spoke for many when he said, "more Jabba the Hutt, more of his feud with Greedo, more Boba Fett".

HOLD SOME BACK

5 In opposition to much of the above, **Lee Harrison** made the case for saving Han's smuggling hi-jinx for another film further down the line – come on, they're not just going to make one Solo movie. "The only elements that we need right now are a rebellious kid, a Wookiee and a flying hamburger!"

And that's not all they want... ↓

→ **Paul Smith** Han Solo as an Artful Dodger type in a sci-fi Oliver Twist? Definitely no songs though!
→ **David Peacock** It would be good if it showed him in the Imperial Academy training to be a Stormtrooper, but then leaving for a life of debauchery!
→ **Brian Thomas** If it's done properly, it could be a really great movie, but be mindful of *Episodes I, II and III*. Concentrate on the backstory of Imperial oppression, meeting Chewie, and Han's Correllian home world.
→ **Medium Atomic Weight** We need Han and Chewie to buddy up in their own road movie. Maybe they could return to Chewie's homeworld Kashyyyk and

celebrate Life Day with his family?
→ **Gareth Williams** A Chewbacca origin story set 200 years before *Star Wars*, when he's just a puppy. Warwick Davis to play Chewie.
→ **Hazeydavey69** I want to know if the red stripe on his trousers means anything!
→ **English Tony** Don't explain how he got the scar on his chin, like they did in the young Indy section in *The Last Crusade*.
→ **Jane Gilbert** Following their recent Stormtrooper cameos, maybe Princes William and Harry could star in this!
→ **Simon Litton** Don't give him daddy issues. That's all I ask.
→ **Jonathan Harvey** A fun adventure: scoundrels; escaping

from tricky situations; sharp wit; great spaceships whizzing around.
→ **Parky** A young Boba Fett having some sort of passing encounter with his future captive. In costume, of course.
→ **Marc Farmer** It turns out he's a Wookiee; a shaved Wookiee with exceptional vocal skills and a passion for waistcoats who's shunned by his tribe for his bizarre appearance. He leaves his homeworld to pursue a career as a jazz drummer, but after months of verbal, emotional and physical abuse from his tutor he sets off as a shaved Wookiee jazz-drumming space-smuggler/pirate (Hmm, not sure you're taking this entirely seriously, Marc – Ed).

CHEWBACCA

JOONAS SUOTAMO

COMING SOON WOLVERINE 3 AND BLACK PANTHER

Next issue you tell us how Hugh Jackman should bow out as Wolvie, and after that it's Black Panther's solo debut.

Keep your eye on gamesradar.com/sfx for details.

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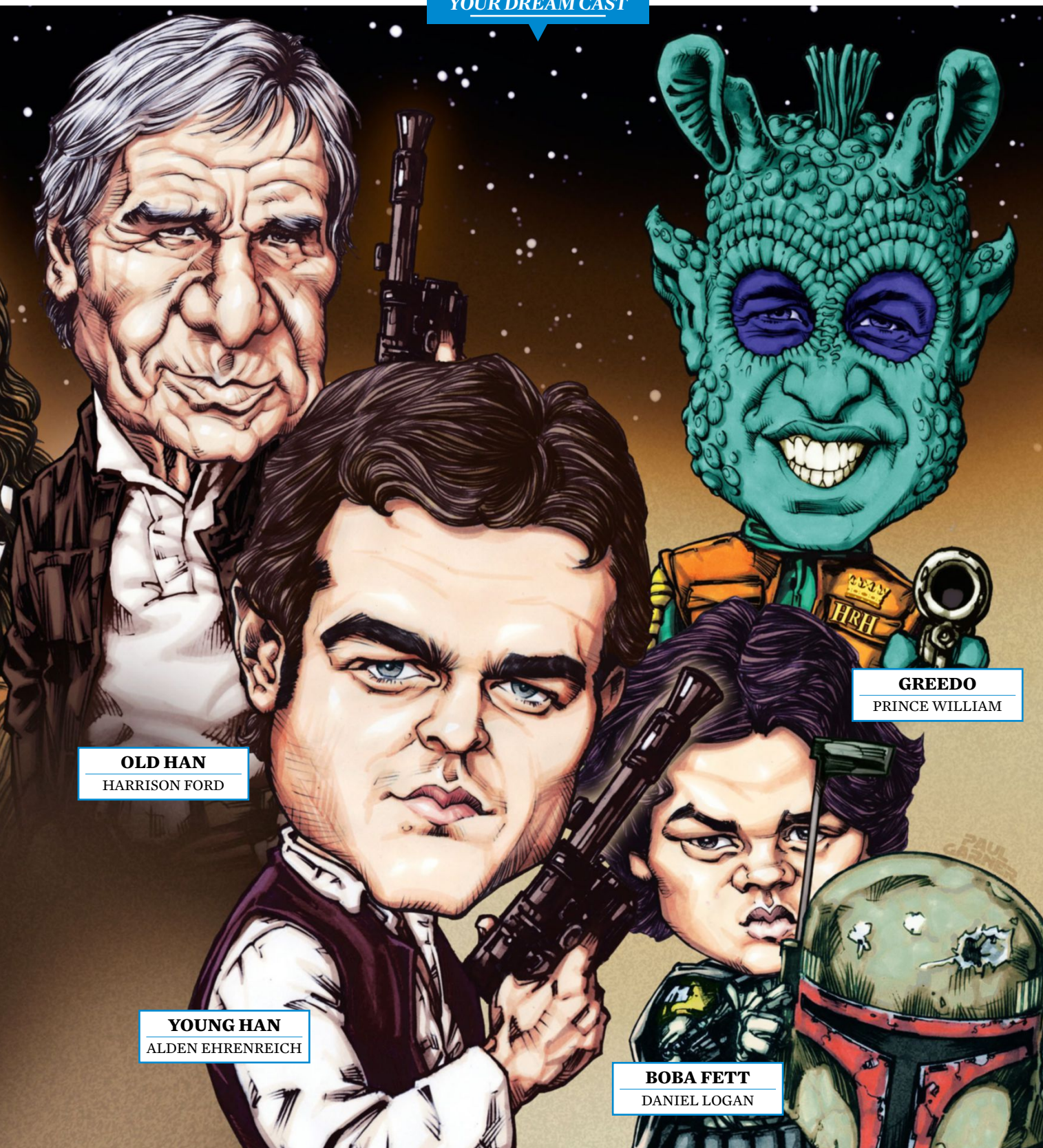
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YOUR DREAM CAST



OLD HAN

HARRISON FORD

YOUNG HAN

ALDEN EHRENREICH

GREEDO

PRINCE WILLIAM

BOBA FETT

DANIEL LOGAN



Penny Dreadful

SFX's high priestess of horror

SECOND COMING

➔ Horror sequels that stink up the first part come out all the time. But is it possible it could work the other way? I saw **Lights Out** this month, and despite a slightly dodgy backstory, it's pretty damn scary. And director David F Sandberg – a Swedish first-timer who made awesome shorts and clearly knows what he's doing behind the camera – is now filming **Annabelle 2**. *Annabelle* is awful – badly plotted, horribly written, cynical horror-by-numbers that doesn't respect its audience. But it made money. Could it be though, that *Annabelle 2* is good? Like, actually good. Sandberg is just starting his studio career, he's going to want to toe the line and won't get free rein from Warners. But maybe he could sneak in some Scandi-subtext and make scary mannequin magic from a lame doll.

FRIGHT NIGHTS

➔ The FrightFest line-up has been announced and as ever it's massive, varied and promises to be a gore-soaked August Bank Holiday. FrightFest opens with **My Father, Die** – a revenge movie directed by Sean son-of-Pierce Brosnan, and closes with Korean zombie movie **Train To Busan** (played Cannes, meant to be good). In between that there are 60 features across the main and discovery screens. It's the usual mix of violence, chills, giggles and wickedness hand-picked from around the world. Hard to know what'll be the breakout hits but the high-profile flicks to look out for are Adam Wingard's **The Woods**, **Director's Cut** (written by and starring Penn Jillette of Penn and Teller fame), Rob Zombie's **31** and Darren Lynn Bousman's **Abattoir**. Early best bets from me though: Simon Rumley's **Johnny Frank Garrett's Last Word**, which sees a man sentenced to death in an unfair trial curse all those involved, and **The Master Cleanse** starring *The Big Bang Theory*'s Johnny Galecki, a character-driven self-help nightmare creature-feature, which is channelling *Gremlins* via *Eat, Pray, Love*.

FOND FAREWELLS

➔ Horror lost two heroes this month at very different points in their careers. **Robin Hardy**,

Be afraid. FrightFest's coming and so is *Moose Jaws*...



Feeling blue in the bizarre *Yoga Hoser*.



British Rail gets a run for its money in *Train To Busan*.



Lights Out (except those ones right there).

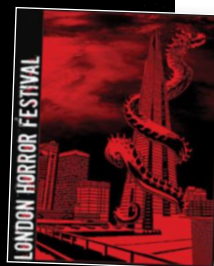
director of *The Wicker Man*, died aged 86. *The Wicker Man* was his debut movie and one of the best and most important Brit horrors of all time. He made *The Wicker Tree* in 2011 and had talked about making a third movie last year. Then there was the frankly *Final Destination*-esque death of 27-year-old actor **Anton Yelchin** who was crushed by his car rolling down his driveway in a freak accident. He's best known for *Star Trek* of course but I urge you to check out *Odd Thomas*, a badly overlooked supernatural thriller whose release went under the radar. Based on the Dean Koontz books, it's about a guy who becomes a detective for the dead and it's excellent. Give it a watch and have a bit of a cry for a talented actor full of potential.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE...

➔ What the hell is a **Yoga Hoser**? I've seen Kevin Smith's newest and frankly I'm still not sure. However, the sort-of-sequel to man in a walrus suit horror *Tusk* is surprisingly better than you might think. It stars Smith's daughter Harley Quinn and Johnny Depp's daughter Lily-Rose as teenage convenience store workers who have to defeat an army of tiny Nazis made of bratwurst. Called *Bratzis*. Dumb fun which might even get dumber with the final part of the trilogy. Yep, Smith has announced it'll be called *Moose Jaws*. Which is exactly what it'll be – ie *Jaws* with a moose. Johnny Depp is set to return as monster hunter Guy Lapointe and Smith is hoping shooting will get underway by the end of the year. ☘

Dreadful thing to do

➔ Look out for the London Horror Festival, the annual fest devoted to horror in the performing arts. This'll be the sixth year of the event, which showcases all kinds of scary theatre. It'll run from 10-30 October in The Old Red Lion Theatre, Islington. Fancy being in it? Submissions close on 30 July – email londonhorrorfestival@gmail.com.



**“To date, the
Star Wars saga has only
picked up one Oscar
nod for acting. Name the
nominated thesp!”**

#SMARTERMOVIE MAG



ALL THAT MATTERS

Novelist and *Star Trek* writer **Melinda Snodgrass** on the crucial relationship between plot and theme



“AS A SPECIES
WE HAVE A
GREAT NEED
TO TRY AND
UNDERSTAND
EACH OTHER”

I’ve been called **Structure Girl** – which as superhero names go isn’t very cool – but I accepted it because my ability to plot is probably what made it relatively easy for me to move between novels and screenplays. In novels you have some leeway to sprawl. Not so much in a script. You need to know where you’re going and get there cleanly and efficiently.

Early in my writing career I couldn’t start a project until I knew the final scene. As I became more adept I found myself asking other writers in my critique group: “Tell me what your book is about – *in one sentence*.” It wasn’t until I was lured into the world of Hollywood that I learned that what I was asking for was what’s known in the industry as an “elevator pitch”.

The elevator pitch has been rightly maligned. It can be just lazy. A satiric example – “She’s a chimp! He’s the Pope! They’re cops!” Still it can have real value for both prose and screenwriters. What is your book/script really about?

Plot and theme aren’t the same things, but they also aren’t separate things. They go together like Pen & Paper, Salt & Pepper, Moose & Squirrel – okay, maybe not that last one, but you get the idea. When these two forces work in tandem it’s going to elevate the writing.

Here’s my elevator pitch, for how to think about plot and theme. *Plot is the stuff that happens. Theme is why it matters.* Let me give an example – in my *Star Trek: The Next Generation* script “The Measure Of A Man” the plot was all about a court hearing to determine if Data was the property of Star Fleet Command. The theme – what is that ephemeral quality that defines the concept of human? I’m not sure we answered it, but we made a stab at it. Here’s another. *Casablanca*, one of the greatest movies ever made. It’s not a romance. The theme is about how a man regains his soul and decides the world is worth fighting for. As a further example how about Tolkien’s *The Lord Of The Rings*. Lots of plot; lost kings return, great evil is overthrown, giant spiders, orcs, and wizards and elves, oh my. The theme – that evil is everywhere, even in the heart of the peaceful Shire, and vigilance and sacrifice is always needed. When I first read the trilogy as a child I thought everything that happened after Aragorn became king was boring. Then I re-read as an adult and realised that *The Scouring of the Shire* is the climax Tolkien had been building to all along.

That’s the moment I understood that when I said I couldn’t start a project until I knew the end what I was really saying was, “I can’t start this until I know what it’s about.” What it says about the human condition. What understanding it offers into the mystery of the human heart. Once I know the theme I can sit down with the cards, and the multi-coloured pens and begin to plot.

There’s a certain arrogance in writers. Why do we think our imaginary friends and fantasies are worthy to be shared with others? And then we have the temerity to ask people for money to get to read those daydreams. I think part of the answer is that stories allow us to examine how humans feel and react. As a species we have a great need to try and understand each other and the world we inhabit. In a sense writers are spirit guides for humans. We do a better job when we actually think about what we’re trying to say. ●

Melinda Snodgrass’s new novel, *The High Ground*, the first in *The Imperials Saga*, is out now.

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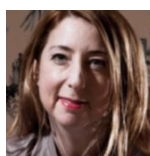


#SMARTERMOVIEMAG

REPLAY

by Ken Grimwood, 1986

Jenny Colgan celebrates a novel about taking second chances



Oh, for the gift of second chances.

I never have a problem with the Weeping Angels in *Doctor Who*. How are they monsters? Who wouldn't want a shot at that? Just go back in time and buy up all of central London real estate. And bet on Leicester City or something. Why anyone would ever run away from an Angel is a mystery to me.

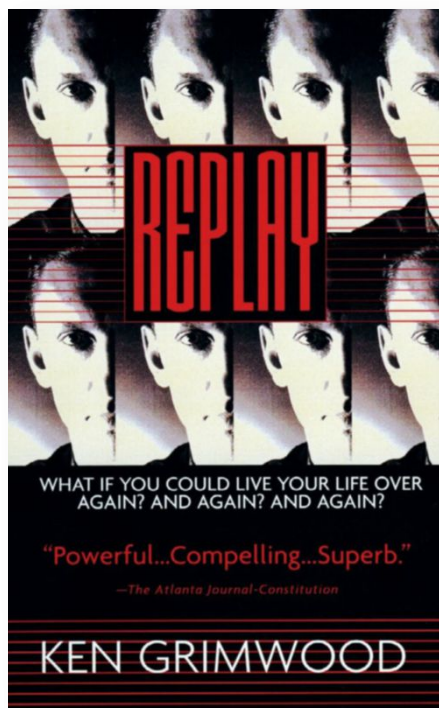
Anyway, this may have some bearing on why *Replay*, by Ken Grimwood, is my choice for Book Club.

It's about exactly that; every time Jeff Winston dies, in a disappointed middle age, he wakes up again as a teenager and gets to have another run at it.

Like all great time-travel books, the premise is incredibly simple; and like all great time-travel books, it is then skilfully pushed to its furthest extent. The replays speed up every time too; you come back later and later in your own life, which makes it all even more compelling, as the replayers race to figure out what it is happening and why, before they hit their final seconds.

It's no spoiler to say we never do find out why, but, like Phil Connors in *Groundhog Day* (and I suspect the makers of that movie had at least a passing acquaintance with this book), Winston becomes a better, wiser person simply by trying.

Apart from the zippy prose, a lot of the fun here is in the detail. Although you may well take issue with his stance on adoption (I certainly do), the idea Grimwood circles around is, of course, that love and taking care of the people you love is all that matters –



while, rather appealingly, pointing out that there are plenty of people you could love. (At different times he settles down happily with three perfectly nice women; it's extremely endearing. His opposite number, Pamela, flounces off in one iteration and decides to marry Dustin Hoffman, something that also appears a highly acceptable way of handling the situation.)

The joy of a good time-travel book – and it is a genre I adore, from *The Man Who Folded*

Himself, through the absurdly detailed *Time And Again*, to Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* (the car crash scene in which I consider to be one of the most upsetting in contemporary fiction) – is when a terrific idea isn't squandered, but considered, and worked through carefully, to provide the most satisfying conclusion possible. *Replay* for me could easily have been twice as long, and there aren't many books I would ever say that about. Although firmly set in the '60s-'80s, this book has hardly dated.

In an interesting time-travel twist, it's now been in development to become a film starring Ben Affleck for over 900 years; but due to that individual's history of stinking up every sci-fi film he comes anywhere near, probably best to just enjoy the book while you can.

It has a tremendous message too: embrace your life, even if it's one where we don't get anything like the second chances most of us feel we deserve.

Although if it ever *does* happen to you – or you ever meet a Weeping Angel – 1) don't forget to memorise the outcomes to some major sporting events, for betting purposes; and 2) probably have a shot at marrying Dustin Hoffman. ●

Jenny T Colgan's Resistance Is Futile and Doctor Who: In The Blood are out now in paperback. She has also written two books as Jane Beaton.

Like this? Try these!

TIME AND AGAIN
by JACK FINNEY (1970)

→ A completely obsessive project about a man who goes to furious lengths to convince you he's actually travelled through time, including journals, photos and descriptions of period drawing rooms.



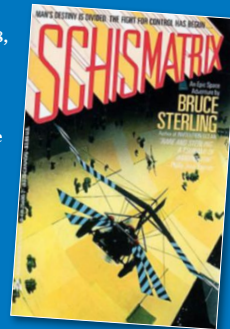
THE DARK IS RISING
by SUSAN COOPER (1973)

→ While all the books in the series are tremendous in their own way, *The Dark Is Rising*, hurling young Will Stanton in and out of time, is perhaps the most enduring.



NEXT ISSUE ↓

Our next edition of Book Club (in SFX 278, on sale 17 August) has Alastair Reynolds writing about Bruce Sterling's 1985 novel *Schismatrix*, set in the Shaper/Mechanist universe. If you've never read it – or just fancy giving it another go – now's the time to do so before a top writer gives his opinion.



Next Issue

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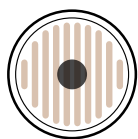
138 Facts About STAR



Losing track of everything that's happening in the new-look *Star Wars* universe? Help is at hand, as Richard Edwards rounds up all you need to know...

WARS





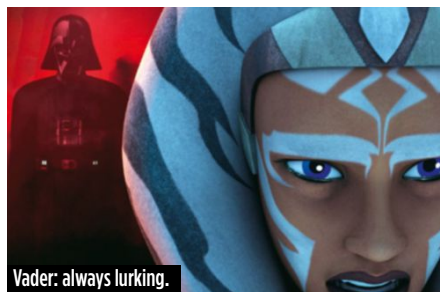
It's not just about the films, you know. Sure, *The Force Awakens* was amazing – and we know a bit about the upcoming *Rogue One* – but there's so much more to *Star Wars* than the big screen. In fact, without the new-look Expanded Universe, with its all-encompassing, consistent, cross-media canon, you'll have serious gaps in your knowledge of that galaxy far, far away. So we've plundered facts from comics, TV, books, novelisations, news, interviews and even Rey's vision – all legitimate sources, mind you; no unofficial leaks for us – to help enhance your understanding of the *Star Wars* universe. There's also some wonderfully random trivia. May the Force be with you!

BEFORE A NEW HOPE

- ☛ Anakin Skywalker's old *Clone Wars* apprentice Ahsoka Tano (who went AWOL before the end of that show) becomes a key leader in the proto-Rebel Alliance, codenamed "Fulcrum".
- ☛ The Emperor unleashes a load of Dark Side-sensitive lackeys called "Inquisitors" to eliminate any Jedi who evaded Order 66. Darth Vader is also involved in the hunt.
- ☛ Ahsoka eventually works out that the guy in the black suit with the heavy breathing is her former master.
- ☛ While they were eventually replaced by the inferior Stormtroopers, some Clone



Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones)
better be in good shape...



Vader: always lurking.

- Troopers (led by good old Captain Rex) survive in hiding.
- ☛ Geonosis, the setting of the final battle in *Attack Of The Clones*, is now devoid of life – all those bug guys (led by Poggle the Lesser) were wiped out by an Empire sterilisation programme.
- ☛ The first Death Star was built in orbit around Geonosis.
- ☛ Darth Maul is still alive, and hanging around on an old Sith World called Malachor.
- ☛ Despite his past allegiances, he's in the mood to kill some Sith. You can't trust 'em...
- ☛ *Star Wars Rebels* hero Ezra Bridger finds a lightsaber with a similar design to Kylo Ren's.

ROGUE ONE

- ☛ *Star Wars: Rogue One* tells the story of the Rebel soldiers who stole the Death Star plans that kickstarted the whole saga in *A New Hope*. Darth Vader's line, "Several transmissions were beamed to this ship by Rebel spies", is apparently the jumping off point for the movie.
- ☛ It's based on an idea from Industrial Light And Magic genius (and Photoshop co-creator) John Knoll.
- ☛ Lucasfilm boss Kathleen Kennedy told *Entertainment Weekly* that, "It's really patterned after a World War II movie."
- ☛ The main character is Jyn Erso (played by Felicity Jones), who's been on her own since 15 and is something of a rebel – even by Rebel Alliance standards.
- ☛ Her dad Galen (Mads Mikkelsen) is a top scientist. Both the Empire and the Rebellion are looking for him.
- ☛ She's joined on the mission by Captain Cassian Andor (Diego Luna), a Rebel intelligence officer who keeps an eye on Jyn...
- ☛ ...cargo pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed)...
- ☛ ...a blind warrior called Chirrut Îmwe



Wonder why Deathtroopers have that name...?



Wrong 'un Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn).



Right 'un Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed).



Scrappers Baze Malbus (Wen Jiang) and Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen).



Captain Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) don't need no helmet.



Even Stormtroopers like a dip in the sea.

(Donnie Yen), who is not a Jedi yet follows their teachings...

- ...and is closely protected by Baze Malbus (Jiang Wen).
- There's also a security droid called K-2SO (a performance-captured Alan Tudyk, who has mechanical previous from *I, Robot*)...
- ...and an insurgent called Saw Gerrera (Forest Whitaker).
- This isn't the first time Saw Gerrera has appeared in *Star Wars*. He was part of an resistance cell on Onderon in season five of *The Clone Wars*, where he received training from Anakin and Obi-Wan Kenobi.
- Mon Mothma is back – and she's played by the same actress (Genevieve O'Reilly) who played her in *Revenge Of The Sith* before her performance ended up on the cutting room floor. The likeness with original actress Caroline Blakiston is uncanny.
- It's been confirmed! Darth Vader is definitely back in *Rogue One*.
- He'll be voiced by James Earl Jones again – as he is in *Star Wars Rebels*.
- But Vader won't be the star. "He will be in the movie sparingly," said Kennedy. "But at a key strategic moment he's going to loom large."
- He's possibly not the biggest Imperial cheese

in the movie. That role is filled by Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn), a man who *really* wants to keep the Emperor happy.

• But doesn't mean that Krennic and Darth Vader are BFFs.

• There's some new Imperial hardware in the movie. Like the not-quite-AT-AT AT-ACTs (All Terrain Armoured Cargo Transports)...

- ...and the wedge-shaped TIE Strikers.
- While old-school Stormtroopers will make an appearance, they have some new cousins. Like the Deathtroopers...
- ...and the Shoretroopers, guaranteed to ruin any beach holiday.
- Some scenes from the movie were filmed at Canary Wharf Tube station.
- The film is said to end about 10 minutes before the start of *A New Hope*. Could this mean a cameo for a certain princess?
- Those much-reported reshoots are hopefully nothing to worry about – Lucasfilm sources told *EW* that they were planned all along. →

AFTER A NEW HOPE

- ❖ Vader isn't flavour of the month after the destruction of the first Death Star – in fact the Emperor blames him for the whole embarrassing episode, and does his evil best to undermine him. He even forces him to report to Death Star minion General Tagge.
- ❖ The Emperor also belittles Vader for what happened to him on Mustafar, complaining that his current, cyborg incarnation is not the all-powerful right-hand man he was looking for.
- ❖ Vader is more than just the Emperor's henchman, however. He has his own agenda, and sets about hunting down the young, Force-sensitive pilot who blew up the Death Star.
- ❖ It turns out *The Empire Strikes Back* wasn't Vader's first business dealing with one Boba Fett – the Sith Lord hires him to track down aforementioned pilot.
- ❖ He also has an audience with Jabba the Hutt – despite the fact Anakin swore he'd never go back to Tatooine.
- ❖ Han Solo's not the only one with a Wookiee sidekick. Boba Fett has an accomplice called Black Krrsantan – known as "Santy".
- ❖ Finding out he has a living son gives Vader a new sense of evil purpose – he's been drifting since Padme's death.
- ❖ Luke doesn't just rely on occasional spiritual guidance from Obi-Wan Kenobi to help in his Jedi education. He recovers his old master's journals from his hut on Tatooine.
- ❖ And visits an old Jedi temple on Vrogas Vas.
- ❖ Lobot was Lando's friend even before they ended up at Cloud City.
- ❖ However, they made the critical error of stealing a ship that belonged to, er, Emperor Palpatine. Oops.

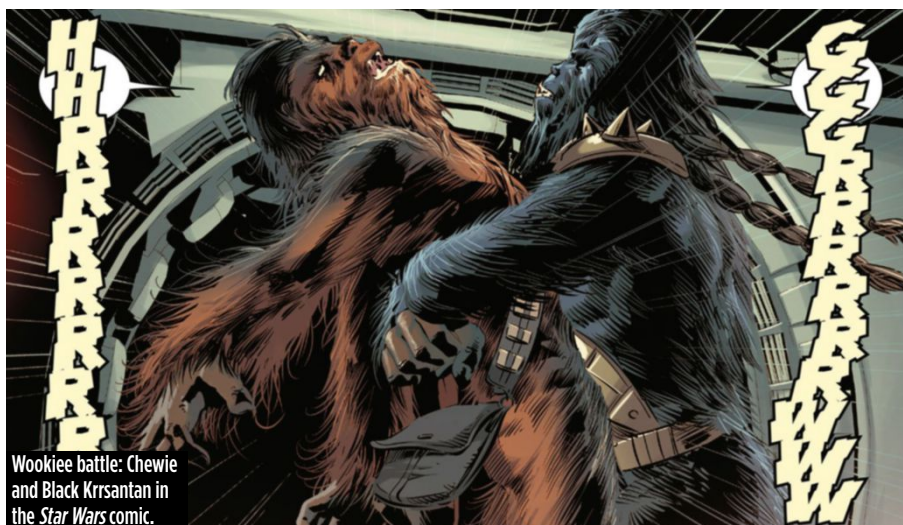


From the horse's mouth in Vader's own comic.

- ❖ After the demise of the first Death Star, Leia travels the galaxy looking for fellow citizens of Alderaan who survived the planet's destruction.
- ❖ Han Solo *may* have had a wife before Leia. Sana Starros claims to be the first (estranged) Mrs Solo – though Han denies it.

AFTER RETURN OF THE JEDI

- ❖ Following the death of the Emperor, leading lights in the Rebel Alliance moved to create the New Republic. Mon Mothma was elected its first chancellor.
- ❖ The destruction of the second Death Star didn't bring the Galactic Civil War to an instant end – as in the old Expanded Universe, Imperial remnants continued to fight the battle.
- ❖ Despite being dead, the Emperor continued to exert an influence – he dispatched droids to leading officers containing a last will and testament that demanded the purging of planets of strategic importance. Palpatine's home planet, Naboo, was near the top of the list.
- ❖ Around this time, Luke Skywalker enlisted Poe Dameron's mum, Shara Bey, to help him recover a pair of Force-sensitive trees (we're not making this up) that had been nicked from the Jedi Temple on Coruscant.
- ❖ The Empire continued its occupation of



Wookiee battle: Chewie and Black Krrsantan in the *Star Wars* comic.



Sana Starros claimed to be married to Han Solo.



You will see Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly) in *Rogue One*.



Major Ematt: big Resistance cheese.

Kashyyyk, so Han Solo and Chewbacca abandoned a New Republic mission to lead a ragtag assortment of smugglers and scoundrels to help liberate the planet.

- Could Boba Fett have survived his close encounter with the Sarlacc, as he did in the old Expanded Universe? There are reports of some Mandalorian armour being found on the surface of Tatooine, "pitted and pocked, as if with some kind of acid"... What do you reckon?
- Darth Vader turned into an icon and martyr. His helmet (that would later find its way into Kylo Ren's hands) was something of a collector's item, and hot property on the black market.
- "Vader Lives!" graffiti was even sighted.
- Jakku, Rey's home, was the site of a

top-secret Imperial research facility before the Empire's fall.

- Around a year after Death Star II was destroyed, the Empire made a last stand on Jakku – and it resulted in the Star Destroyer *Infliktor* crashing on the desert planet's surface, creating Jakku's most famous sightseeing spot.
- The Empire eventually signed the Galactic Concordance, a peace treaty that ended the ongoing Civil War.
- Not all of the former Imperials were prepared to put up with the changes, however – loads left to make their home in the Unknown Regions.
- Among them was General Hux's dad, Brendol. A veteran of the Clone Wars, he was an important figure at the infamous Imperial Academy on Arkanis. His son used some of his old man's training techniques he pioneered to give instructions to First Order Stormtroopers.
- Hux Sr created a crack team of Stormtroopers, where the qualification for membership was killing one of your fellow cadets. That's team-building!
- Poe Dameron grew up on Yavin IV – y'know, the planet where the Rebels were based in *A New Hope* – with one of those Force-sensitive trees nearby.
- He's been flying since he was six.



You should have seen the eBay bids for this.

• Princess Leia is affectionately known as "Huttslayer" among various members of the criminal underworld.

• In one of the less PC additions to the new *Star Wars* canon, Han Solo installed a kitchen on the Millennium Falcon as a wedding gift for Leia. Presumably before that Han and Chewie lived off takeaway from, er, Pizza the Hutt?

• It wasn't all sweetness and light back in the New Republic. As Mon Mothma pushed for demilitarisation, the Senate split into a couple of distinct factions. The Populists believed every planet should control its own destiny. The Centrists craved a more authoritarian, centralised government – kinda like the Empire.

• About seven years before the events of *The Force Awakens*, Leia was on the verge of being elected the New Republic's first ever First Senator...

• ...until a rival senator told the galaxy that Darth Vader was her dad.

• Up to this point, only Luke, Leia and Han knew. Not even Kylo Ren (then Ben Solo) was aware of his grandfather's identity – he was off training with Luke at Jedi school. (We're guessing Supreme Leader Snoke got in touch around about now.)

• Han and Chewie didn't spend all the years between *Return Of The Jedi* and *The Force Awakens* capturing Rathtars – Han took part in and organised spaceship races...

• ...while Chewie went back to Kashyyyk to live a quiet family life with the Wookiees.

• Meanwhile, former Imperials have been building a new army and fleet in the Unknown Regions, going by the name of... you guessed it.

• The First Order was initially bankrolled by proceeds from smuggling and gambling.

• The New Republic was slow to realise the First Order was a threat, and was happy to let them do their thing, just so long as they stayed put on the other side of the galaxy.

• Leia was a tad more concerned, however, so formed the Resistance.

• Among her first intake: former Rebel Alliance legends Nien Nunb and Admiral Ackbar.

• And then there's Major Caluan Ematt (above) – he was pretty important in the old Rebel Alliance, apparently.

• The New Republic doesn't officially endorse the Resistance – they don't want to be seen opposing the First Order – but assists Leia behind the scenes.

• Ace pilot Poe Dameron was a top Republic flyer before signing up.

• Snap Wexley, the X-Wing pilot played by JJ Abrams regular Greg Grunberg, is Temmin, the tech-genius kid who played a key role on Akiva in *Star Wars: Aftermath*.

• His mum, Norra, was a Y-wing pilot in the assault on the second Death Star. →

THE FORCE AWAKENS ERA

- ☛ Lor San Tekka, the old guy who gives Poe Dameron the map to Luke Skywalker's whereabouts, isn't a Jedi knight. He is, however, a follower of the Church of the Force, and holds similar ideals to the Jedi.
- ☛ After a lifetime travelling the galaxy, he's settled in Tuanul village on Jakku – which is where Poe Dameron finds him.
- ☛ Rey was abandoned on Jakku by parents unknown. Bizarrely, they chose to leave her in the care of blobby criminal Unkar Plutt.
- ☛ It seems, however, that Unkar Plutt did look after her a *bit* – he kept his heavies off her case because he knew how good Rey was at salvaging.
- ☛ Niima Outpost, the home of Unkar Plutt and one of Jakku's main settlements, is named after Niima the Hutt. She moved in after the Battle of Jakku, with much of Hutt Space in a mess after Jabba's death.
- ☛ The X-Wing pilot helmet Rey wears on Jakku belonged to a Captain Dosmit Raeh.
- ☛ *The Force Awakens* does manage to squeeze in JJ Abrams' trademark Kelvin reference – there's a Kelvin Ridge on Jakku. (We're yet to track down a nod to Slusho.)
- ☛ Finn's ID number, FN 2187, is also the number of Leia's cell in *A New Hope*.
- ☛ Han Solo's stylish (okay, dad-) jacket in *The Force Awakens* is made of Nerf leather. Appropriate for cinema's most famous Nerf Herder.
- ☛ Han and Chewie's transport is called the Eravana.
- ☛ Rathtars, like the ones Han and Chewie are hauling, are thought to be related to Sarlaccs.
- ☛ The golden dice in the Millennium Falcon cockpit celebrate the game of sabacc where Han Solo won the ship from Lando.
- ☛ The red-armoured Guavian Death Gang soldiers who storm Han and Chewie's cargo vessel are cybernetically enhanced, *and* have chemicals injected into their blood to enhance performance.
- ☛ Maz Kanata's planet is called Takodana. It was once on the frontline of a Jedi v Sith war.
- ☛ The members of Maz Kanata's house band are as follows: Taybin Ralorsa, Ubert "Sticks" Quaril, Sudswater Dillifay Glon and the spectacularly named Infrablue Zedbeddy Coggins.
- ☛ In the *Force Awakens* novelisation, Unkar Plutt follows Rey to Takodana to demand the Millennium Falcon back – and ends up with his arm ripped off by Chewbacca...
- ☛ Alec Guinness's voice can be heard in Rey's vision in Maz's palace. He says "You will be tempted," and – thanks to clever editing of an



The calm before the craziness...

old recording of "Afraid" – "Rey".

- ☛ Ewan McGregor also provides an Obi-Wan line: "Rey, you've taken your first steps."
- ☛ And Yoda says, "Its energy surrounds us, binds us" – a line recycled from *The Empire Strikes Back*.
- ☛ Other key sounds include a snippet of Vader breathing, and Luke's pained yell of "Nooooooo!" from *The Empire Strikes Back*.
- ☛ Wollivan, one of the patrons of Maz's castle, has *Star Wars* heritage – it's Warwick Davis inside the costume.
- ☛ Kylo Ren is the master of the Knights Of Ren, a Dark Side outfit overseen by Supreme Leader Snoke.
- ☛ Snoke has decreed that no one in the First Order should speak Kylo Ren's real name, Ben Solo.
- ☛ Ren believes Kylo Ren is the perfect embodiment of the Force – a balance between the dark and light sides.
- ☛ Ren exists outside the normal First

Order chain of command – much as his grandad Darth Vader did in the Empire.

- ☛ Ren's unconventional lightsaber contains a "stressed" kyber crystal – it's so powerful that it needs those plasma vents on the hilt to let out some of the excess energy.
- ☛ It's based on an old Sith design.
- ☛ Kylo Ren's Star Destroyer, the Finalizer, is the first in the new "Resurgent" line.
- ☛ The chromium plating on Phasma's armour was taken from an unlikely source – a ship once owned by Palpatine.
- ☛ The silver sheen nominally helps to reflect radiation, but mostly it's just about looking damned intimidating.
- ☛ She prides herself on knowing the serial number of every Stormtrooper under her command.

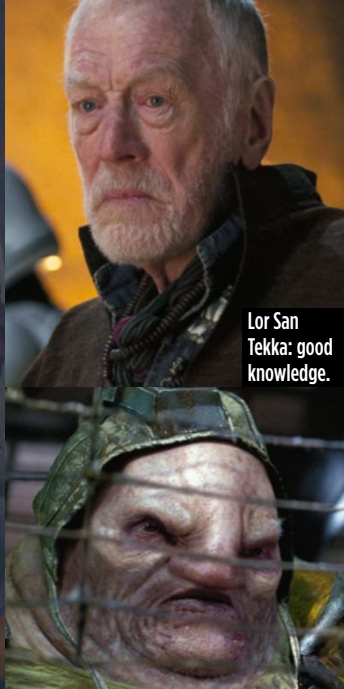
☛ The First Order know that standards among the ranks of Imperial Stormtroopers were a little shoddy, so set stricter rules for their own troops.



Where are the Men in Black when you need them?



But it wasn't the Guavian Death Gang who did Han in...



Lor San Tekka: good knowledge.



Maz Kanata: what she lacks in eyesight...

Unkar Plutt: dodgy geezer.



Snoke: attuned to awakenings.



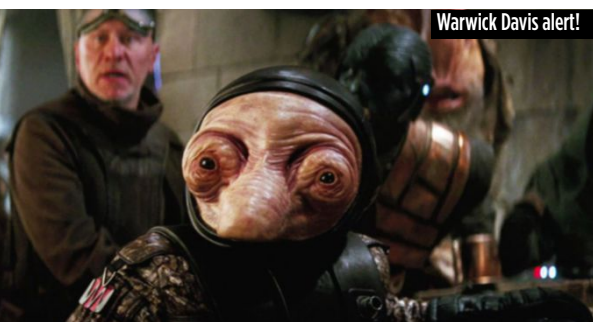
"The beard? Yeah, I thought it was a good idea."

- They also care a little bit more about their pilots than the Empire did – TIE Fighters now come with deflector shields.
- Resistance pilots are given a training exercise known as the "Porkins Belly Run".
- The planet that was used to build Starkiller Base was selected for its energy-transmitting crystal deposits.
- The main planet you see blown up in *The Force Awakens* is Hosnian Prime. At this point it's the capital of the New Republic – after the fall of the Empire, the Republic decided to shift its centre of government to signify a break with the past.
- The woman in the foreground is Korr Sella, Leia's envoy to the New Republic.
- The camel-like chap standing next to her is the soon-to-be-former Chancellor of the New Republic, Lanever Vilecham.
- The Stormtrooper who succumbs to Rey's mind trick is played by Daniel Craig.
- Other people in Stormtrooper armour include Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich and *Star Trek* composer Michael Giacchino.
- The Resistance base is on the planet of D'Qar.

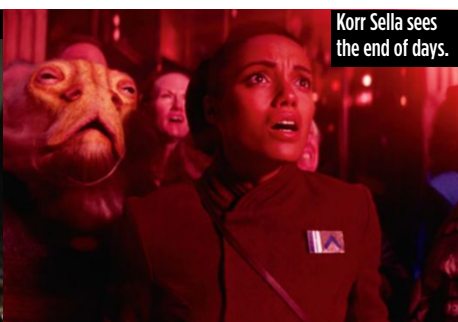
- Poe Dameron's black X-wing isn't just stylish – the paint job helps scatter sensors.
- This Resistance transport is made of old ships the underfunded outfit has salvaged – that's a B-wing cockpit bolted to the side.
- Carrie Fisher's daughter, Billie Lourd, plays Resistance officer Lieutenant Connix.
- C-3PO now knows over seven million forms of communication.
- His red arm isn't a glaring continuity error. He wears it in honour of Omri, another protocol droid who sacrificed himself to save Threepio's life during a mission for the Resistance. (We have no idea why Threepio's gone back to a more standard gold arm at the end of *The Force Awakens*.)
- Unlike his verbose golden colleague, R2-D2 is yet to have his memory wiped after seven decades of service.
- Comic actors Bill Hader and Ben Schwartz (*Parks And Recreation*) were the "vocal consultants" for BB-8.
- The planet where Rey meets Luke is called Ahch-To. It's thought to be the home of the first Jedi temple.

AFTER THE FORCE AWAKENS

- *Episode VIII*, directed and written by *Looper*'s Rian Johnson, was filmed under the working title of "Space Bear".
- It'll pick up where it left off on Ahch-To, with Luke and Rey.
- Looks like Captain Phasma made it out of that trash compactor on Starkiller Base – Gwendoline Christie's back in *Episode VIII*. Expect her to have a bigger role this time out – it can't be much smaller!
- Kelly Marie Tran, Laura Dern and Benicio del Toro have joined the cast. All we know is that Benicio del Toro is probably a bad guy
- Some scenes have been filmed in regular *Game Of Thrones* location Dubrovnik.
- And Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley and Mark Hamill have been spotted arriving for filming in Ireland, making us think there might be a face off between Kylo Ren, Luke and Rey.
- John "Finn" Boyega has said *Episode VIII* will be "a different take, darker, bigger" than its predecessor.
- There may be more movies after *Episode IX*, though Disney CEO Bob Iger has said, "I don't know how many, I don't know how often." •



Warwick Davis alert!



Korr Sella sees the end of days.

ON SET
EXCLUSIVE!

Damaged

ROCK
AND
ROLL

SUIC

IDE

Can the supercrims of Task Force X save DC's faltering cinematic universe? Jordan Farley witnesses superhero cinema break bad on the Toronto set of **SUICIDE SQUAD**

When *Batman V Superman* was released earlier this year it didn't just promise an epic clash of the titans, it was also the launch pad for an Extended Universe road-mapped right through to 2020. Things didn't exactly go to plan. After a critical beatdown and toxic word of mouth, *BvS* made a relatively underwhelming \$872 million at the box office, well short of the expected billion dollar benchmark, leading many to wonder what DC could do to earn back the goodwill they squandered. The answer was already in the can.

JOKER IN THE PACK?

It's July 2015 and *SFX* is at Pinewood Toronto Studios, base of operations for David Ayer's big-screen *Suicide Squad* adaptation. The facility's humongous soundstages are currently home to several of the tailor-made cells for Belle Reve penitentiary's notorious inmates, as well as a full-size train station entrance modelled on New York's Penn Station. A massive battle between Task Force X – the supervillains forced to fight for their government – and a mysterious, otherworldly threat known as the Eyes of the Adversary is due to be shot here later in the week, but today filming has moved to Buttonville Municipal Airport where the Squad, recently released from prison and freshly implanted with coercive nanite bombs in their necks, are reunited with the gear confiscated when they were thrown in the slammer.

While Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) hacks away at her long hair with a pair of scissors and reptilian cannibal Killer Croc (Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje) tears open his prison-regulation vest like a late '80s Hulk Hogan, Will Smith's Floyd Lawton, aka master marksman Deadshot, has a



Maybe not the superheroes we need, but the ones we deserve...

moment of introspection when strapping on his wrist-mounted magnums. "Every time I put this on somebody dies," he muses. "And?" comes the response. "I like putting it on." Though the Squad boasts its fair share of

psychotics, sociopaths and straight-up nutjobs, Deadshot serves as the group's level-headed leader. In practice if not on paper, at least, with Amanda Waller (Viola Davis) and her man-in-the-field Rick Flag (Joel Kinnaman) still pulling the real strings. "[Deadshot's] the rational one of the group," writer/director David Ayer tells *SFX* during a brief pause between filming. "Trustworthy isn't the word, but he's the one that you could sit down and have a beer with. He's sort of an axis to build the squad around."

In building the Squad Ayer went back

TWISTED FIRESTARTER

JAY HERNANDEZ IS DIABLO



"The mechanics of every hero is different, whether it's shooting or it's cutting or it's boomerangs, but there's this metahuman aspect to my character which is really intriguing. Part of the story is waiting for the moment when the change comes and he decides to fight. Because I'm resisting for almost the entire film, being violent and hurting people, even if it means for the greater good. So that's part of my struggle as a character. You don't really know what he can do, the extent to which he can hurt people. You're waiting for him to explode, and eventually he does and it's insane."





Cara Delevingne plays the Enchantress.



Getting in some much-needed therapy.

CLOWNIN' AROUND

MARGOT ROBBIE IS HARLEY QUINN



What role does Harley play in the Squad?

The other characters are pretty serious, so in a lot of the scenes I play up the bubbly side, as opposed to the whole movie being really, really grim. But on the other hand, I had to dig pretty deep and go to some dark places.

How different are Harley and Dr Harleen Quinzel?

I didn't want it to be a complete body swap, there needs to be a connection between the two, but there are subtle differences. [Harleen's] not as outwardly crazy, but she's still crazy in love and it's making her act crazy - even though she's trying to be rational about it all. And the accent's slightly more pulled back when she's working in the asylum.

How good are you with the baseball bat?

The baseball bat's really heavy, actually. I hit myself in the head with the fake one the other night when we were doing a scene. I was like, "If that was the real one just then, I would have needed facial reconstruction." It's a dangerous weapon, but I'm getting good with it.

Are superhero movies sexist?

It's always a bit of a generalisation, but I wouldn't even pigeonhole it just to comic book movies. I feel like a lot of movies you could say are sexist.

A lot of the time I pick up a script and I love the male character and I'm not that excited about the female character. This project was probably the strongest example of me picking up a script where I was like, "I want the female character. That is the best character."

Harley Quinn is, in my opinion, the best character. If I could have picked one, I would have picked her anyway.

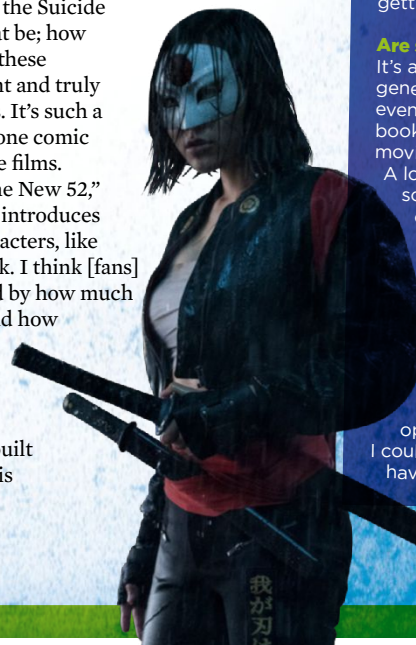
“I think fans are going to be surprised by how faithful this is to canon”



“Look, I thought you were great in *Independence Day*.”

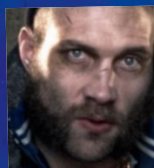
to the '80s - namely John Ostrander's highly influential run on the *Suicide Squad* comics. “I really studied the Ostrander series,” Ayer says. “I love the sense of Cold War paranoia and the manipulation of the *Suicide Squad* by the powers that be; how they're caught between these millstones of government and truly more impressive villains. It's such a rich world. I mean, any one comic issue can almost be three films.

“And then you have the New 52,” Ayer continues. “Which introduces some fantastic new characters, like El Diablo and King Shark. I think [fans] are going to be surprised by how much orthodoxy is in there, and how faithful this is to the DC canon, which I think is very important. You want to be loyal to the people that have really built the DC universe, which is the readers.” →



THE COMEBACK KING

JAI COURTNEY
IS CAPTAIN
BOOMERANG



As an Australian what did it mean to play an Australian comic book character?

It's incredibly

liberating to actually play an Australian in a mainstream Hollywood film, but the boomerang was something I was slightly nervous about. I knew it had to be handled with delicacy because you're talking about a sacred weapon to the indigenous people of Australia. I wanted to know that it was done right.

Did you have to go through boomerang boot-camp?

I had my own little boomerang boot camp, yeah. I would hit the park. I didn't know how much I'd need to be throwing them, but I thought it would be foolish to show up and have no idea what I was doing. They're pretty easy to throw poorly, but it's quite hard to master. I'm glad I'm not hunting kangaroos with it because I'd do more harm than good.

How far do you push the character's questionable attitudes?

There's some racial slur things that he throws around in the comic books where I thought, "Man, I hope we're not going there" because in this world we're obviously all bad guys, but there's something incredibly charming and likeable about everyone, and while I can have fun investigating the darker side of the man it probably wasn't necessary to make him someone I was embarrassed to play.

Clearly a veteran of WWE cage fights.

“The Joker is probably the best-known villain in the world”


But with the Squad's membership constantly in flux thanks to a sky-high mortality rate, how did Ayer settle on the final line-up, including sharpshooter Deadshot, psychotic pixie dream girl Harley Quinn, military man Rick Flag, Flag's samurai bodyguard Katana, antipodean assassin Captain Boomerang, firestarter Diablo, ancient witch Enchantress and master of ropes Slipknot? "It's more of a gut thing. Like, 'Wow, I want to see these characters together.'" Ayer explains. "Obviously, I drew on the New 52. And a lot of them were Batman villains, so everything neatly tied together."

To that end Ayer enlisted the ultimate Batman villain – the Joker. Jared Leto's Clown Prince of Crime has been subjected to incessant scrutiny since his radical makeover was first revealed. The Joker isn't part of Task Force X, however. Appropriately, he'll act as the film's wildcard, appearing predominantly in flashbacks which chronicle the Joker's corruption of Dr Harleen Quinzel and their ascension to king and queen of Gotham's criminal underworld. As you might expect, it was the character Ayer had the toughest time writing.

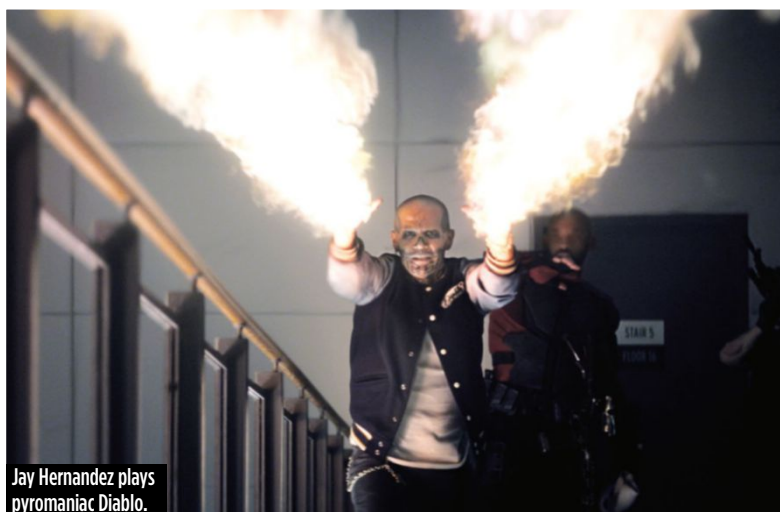
"The Joker is probably the best-known villain in the world," Ayer says. "If you look at him in terms of what he represents mythologically – a force of chaos, a prankster, a trickster, evil with a smile – there's something universal about him. The idea is what are the universal qualities? And then come up with a fresh version that's not different just to be different, but is the Joker and is that character, with a bit of a different wrapper and a little bit of a different execution. He has to be very respectful and elegantly crafted, because you really are following in the footsteps of giants."

"He's very much in the canon, but with some modern twists," Ayer continues. "He's a bit of a modern villain. He dresses contemporarily. He obviously has tattoos. Yet at the same time, I went to great lengths to honour his look and his history. I think it's →





The world's most unpromising netball team.



Jay Hernandez plays pyromaniac Diablo.

DRESSED TO KILL

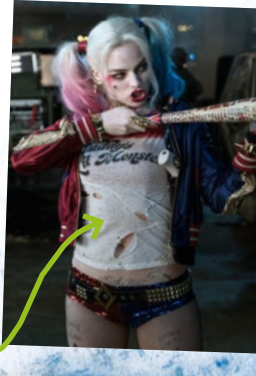
COSTUME DESIGNER **KATE HAWLEY** ON HARLEY AND THE JOKER'S NEW LOOKS

ON HARLEY QUINN...

"She has many different looks in this film. We've made more costumes than [we] had opportunities to use. We made the corsets, we made the jester suits, we've done all of that, and they're all in a dress-up box on set. There's a lovely moment where they're going on this mission and there's a big thing where they get all their clothes back. David wanted Harley to be outrageous, almost like: 'We're taking it seriously, and you're looking at handbags and putting on your rave gear?' But that's all part of her distraction, things like make-up and stilettos. She totally owns everything."

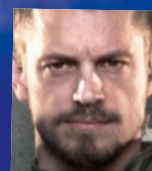
ON THE JOKER...

"The Joker and Harley Quinn are the king and queen of this underworld in the flashbacks. It's a more colourful world with almost like a circus feel. David said it's like psychological warfare. These tail coats have been made for Jared, and they're all embroidered in gold. It's almost like there's a coronation with the Joker taking the crown. He is the devil in this world. It's like doing a modern Hieronymus Bosch. There's a satanic goat image. There's a Bosch eyeball. And we've got Batman. But there's moments in the club where we play with him. Like the Joker taking the piss out of his outfit."



BEHIND ENEMY LINES

JOEL KINNAMAN
is RICK FLAG



How does Flag fit into the Squad?

He's basically holding the team hostage, because they all have

explosive implants in their necks. He's forced by his boss to do this, but he doesn't necessarily agree and over the course of the movie you see how that allegiance shifts and how he questions his morality.

Flag isn't a criminal, so is he the hero of the group?

What I really like about the script is it questions what is a hero and what is a bad guy. It takes place in the grey zone more than the black and white. There are some good guys doing some bad things and some really bad guys doing some good things.

We hear the cast got some interesting gifts from Jared Leto...

There were rehearsals everyday for a month with all of us except Jared, who was doing his own thing. He'd have the guy playing his assistant deliver these gifts: a live rat for Margot, and then he came in with a dead pig and just threw it down on the table. So me and Jai [Courtney] pulled him back into the room, put the pig around his shoulders, put an apple in his mouth and then Margot put a heart on him and took some pictures and sent them to Mr J. So there was some psychological warfare going on.

You can bet Captain Boomerang will be back one day...

“I just want to tell a story about broken people who want to come together”

important that when people see the film, they will see the Joker. He's almost bigger than the film, bigger than the comics. There's something really transcendent about what he represents, and I feel like that definitely came through."

HIS AND HERS

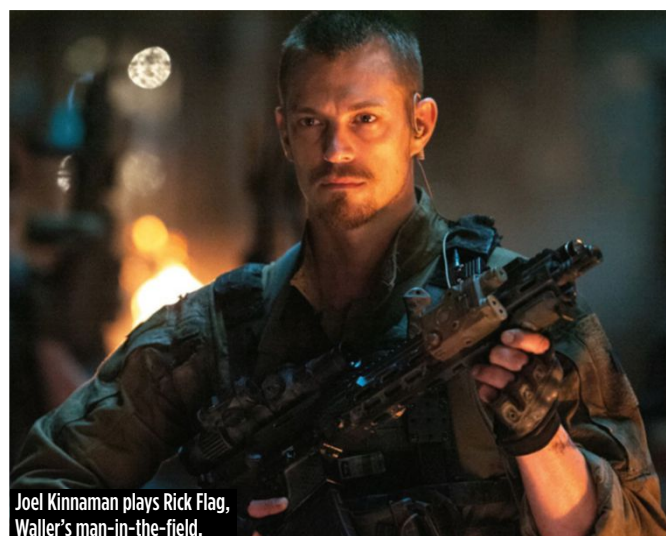
Alongside a new Joker, the film also marks the big-screen debut of a live-action Harley Quinn. As well as injecting a much-needed sense of fun into the DCEU, Harley's twisted relationship with Mistah J will power the film's most important subplot. "He loves her, but he can never admit it," says Ayer. "And he hates that he needs her, and it drives him even crazier. And she loves him. It really is this epic romance. And then it's just this jockeying of control. Was she created by him? Or did she create herself to be with him? There's all these interesting questions."

With Amanda Waller recruiting the worst of the worst from supermax slammer Belle Reve to embark on a suicide mission against a mythical adversary unearthed by archeologist June Moone (Cara Delevigne, who also plays Enchantress), the million dollar question is: why should we

sympathise with a ragtag collection of ruinous reprobates? "The fact that it's not just another cookie cutter comic book movie. That it's about bad guys, and you can go in and explore their lives and explore a different morality," Ayer responds. "You automatically like the good guy because the good guy saves the kitten from the tree. But with the bad guys, it's more of a creative challenge. How do you get an audience to like a villain? That was the fun of the challenge for me."

As for building on DC's fledgling cinematic universe, *Suicide Squad* will incorporate elements for future films to pick up on – including a cameo from Ben Affleck's Dark Knight, who's responsible for putting most of the Squad behind bars – but Ayer is focused on his film first, which may come as a relief after *BvS*'s heavy-handed sequel set-ups. "There's talk about how to mount a franchise and the business stuff and everything like that. I'm not worried about that," Ayer bluntly states. "I just want to tell a story about broken people who want to come together, who discover that they can have friendships and they can form a family and that they can love each other. I just want to make an amazing movie." ●

Suicide Squad opens on 5 August.



Joel Kinnaman plays Rick Flag, Waller's man-in-the-field.

BLADE RUNNER

KAREN FUKUHARA
IS KATANA



Did you know how to sword fight before shooting?
I've had karate training for about five years and I

used to compete in karate forms back in high school. For sword fighting I panicked and took one private lesson with someone that practised sword fighting the day before my audition for about five or six hours and he taught me everything and I went into the audition and I guess it worked.

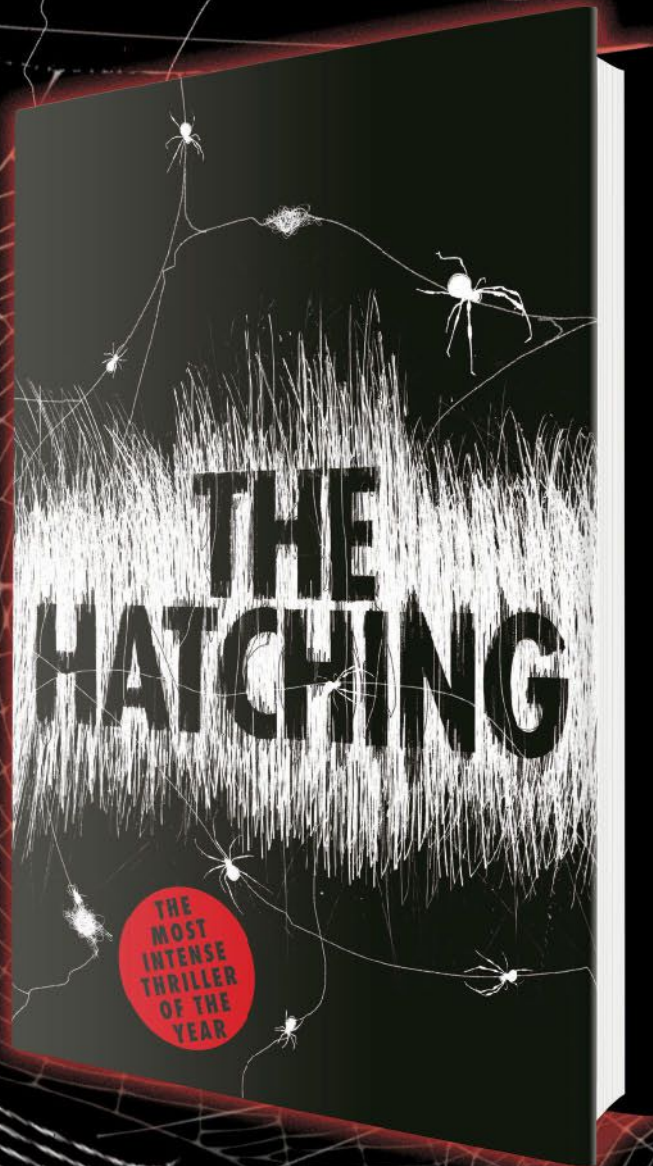
How much do you know about Katana's past?

Her backstory is not the focus of the movie, but I have that in me. Her journey is trying to find people she can trust. She starts off kind of a lone wolf as the protector of Rick Flag, but by the end of the movie she's really become part of a team, part of a family, so growth wise her issue is trust.

How do you connect emotionally with a sword?

I had a couple of questions about the Soultaker, if it would be hard to connect with an object. But from the get-go when I read the script I realised the Soultaker is not just a sword, it's a character. It's my husband. So when I realised that it became very easy to connect and related to an object really.

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05.07.2016

CRAZY IN LOVE

Joseph McCabe meets Paul Dini, creator of **HARLEY QUINN**

While no Batman foe since the Dark Knight's golden age has had quite the cultural impact of Harley Quinn, maybe it's a little unfair to call her a villain. The former Dr Harleen Quinzel – a psychiatrist who carried her fascination with the Joker a little too far – is really a free-spirited antihero, a loveable sprite who was led astray by her “Mistah J”.

Writer-producer Paul Dini created Harley for *Batman: The Animated Series* in the '90s, and partly based her on his friend, actress and comedienne Arleen Sorkin; who voiced the character throughout the show's run.

“I knew I wanted a henchgirl in one episode,” Dini tells *SFX*. “And I felt it was a character that Arleen could play really well. I had seen her play a jester character in a fantasy sequence on the soap opera *Days of Our Lives*. I thought, ‘That’s really funny. Maybe I’ll use some of that for the henchgirl character...’

“I told Arleen that Harley was basically a snappy blonde but kind of a bad girl. Sort of a cross between the wayward girls that would follow around the Riddler and the Joker and the Penguin in the 1966 series – the henchwomen types – and a little bit of the gum-cracking wisegirl/wiseguy type, Miss Adelaide in *Guys And Dolls*.”

FINDING A VOICE

Sorkin's own voice contributed to Harley's sassy attitude. “She has an East Coast accent,” laughs Dini. “She just pushed it a little bit. She brought a little bit of a Judy Holliday type flutter into it”

Harley's character breakthrough came when



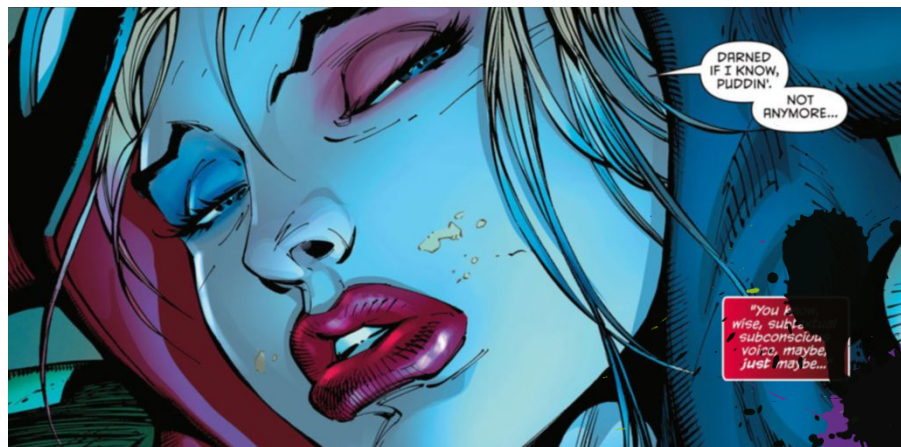
her creator decided she could be even funnier than the Joker...

“I really didn't have any plans for her other than the henchgirl who was better at getting laughs out of the other gang members than the Joker was. That was sort of the start of who the

character was for me. I gave her the name Harley Quinn because I thought Harley was a fun name for a girl. And a lot of Batman character names have a bit of a pun to them.”

Now that Harley is DC Comics' most popular character after Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman, Dini is thrilled to see her win more fans through her ongoing solo comic and this summer's *Suicide Squad* movie, in which she's played by Margot Robbie.

“It looks like Margot went after that interpretation with a great amount of zeal and affection,” says Dini. “She wants to do a spin-off movie, which I think is really gratifying. It appears that she went out and did a lot of research and really has embraced the character. Whatever happens with the character down the road in subsequent movies it appears that she'll be handled with a lot of affection and intelligence.”





“It appears that she’ll be handled with a lot of affection and intelligence”

FASHION MADNESS

PAUL DINI'S GUIDE TO HARLEY'S EVER-CHANGING LOOKS...

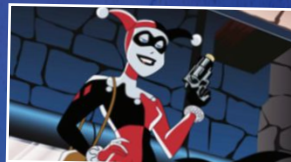
PAUL DINI'S ORIGINAL COSTUME DESIGN

"I was thinking about the henchgirls from the old '60s show mixed with Barbara Eden, with a miniskirt and a two-tone outfit. It was a first attempt by someone whose strong point is *not* drawing that sort of thing."



BRUCE TIMM'S ANIMATED SERIES DESIGN

"When Bruce came in and did the finished model he gave it much more of his own sensibility and made it look like it blended with the series well. It's my favourite of her looks."



THE HARLEY QUINN COMIC BOOK

"The rollergirl look that Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner have her in is a lot of fun... I have a little figurine of her on my desk. I like that outfit too. That's sort of his riff on Jimmy and Amanda's outfit."



THE SUICIDE SQUAD MOVIE COSTUME

"The blue and red looks nice. I can see how the jester look wouldn't have fit in necessarily with the more street, dangerous look of the Suicide Squad movie."

ZACHARY QUINTO

Spock 2.0 returns in *Star Trek Beyond*. Most logical

Words by Drew Turney /// Photography by Michael Friberg

Whether it's because he's a producer as well as an actor or just a very intelligent guy, Zachary Quinto is one of Hollywood's most erudite and thoughtful movie stars, perfectly cast as the modern incarnation of Mr Spock, the logical yin to Captain Kirk's gut-instinct yang in *Star Trek Beyond*. Just like his on-screen alter ego, Quinto is rarely lost for words, considers each question carefully and knows just where he's at. Unlike the Vulcan, however, he is similarly up front about his emotions, as *SFX* discovers when we talk to the 39-year-old star about trekking back to the stars, his friendship with Leonard Nimoy and his dedication to LGBT rights. "I really feel like the pursuit of an authentic life is a life-long one," he tells us. "I feel like I'm busier and happier than I've been in a long long time, and I feel really grateful for that."

Where is Spock at in *Star Trek Beyond* and what obstacles is he going to face?

☞ At the beginning of the film we're in the middle of our five-year mission when things go tits-up. Spock is in a couple of different places. Psychologically and emotionally, he is approaching a bit of an existential crossroads of sorts. He's really trying to figure out how he can best be of service to others, where his efforts are best directed in terms of the contribution that he's making either historically or to the Vulcan race, and the efforts to repopulate and rebuild Vulcan. As the movie goes on, physically he is compromised and severely injured, and that becomes a primary obstacle for him throughout the film. Things are happening on different levels for him throughout most of the movie.

Does the struggle between logic and emotion continue?

☞ Yeah, in a way. Less so as things progress. In a way, he is a little bit more at peace with the duality that he possesses. Other things that happen in the course of the movie – I won't spoil it for you – but they speak right to that very point, the difference between logic and emotion, and when they are better employed.

How different was working with incoming director Justin Lin after JJ Abrams?

☞ They're very different people and very different directors,

but Justin is enormously talented in his own right, and I feel like he came in with a quiet confidence. He's an incredible visual storyteller, and yet also very concerned with the underpinnings of the emotional lives of the characters. He was really fantastic to work with.

The first trailer almost had a *Fast & Furious* vibe.

☞ Yeah, there's a lot of action for sure, but there's also a lot of humour, a lot of heart. Any good blockbuster should be a balance of those things. Hopefully we're able to strike that balance ourselves.

How have things gone since your decision to come out?

☞ I absolutely look back on my journey and recognise the value of that decision both for me personally and in a larger sense for the movement, to be a part of the movement toward LGBT equality, and that has obviously made incredible strides in the last few years, certainly in the US. But there's still more work to be done. I'm glad I can be a part of that work and help lend my voice to a really important and momentous transition in our culture and our society that we're literally living through right now. It's a very exciting time to be a part of the LGBT community, for sure.

All the recent talk about diversity seems to be focused on racial diversity. Are you ever concerned that could distract from issues of gender and sexual diversity in the business?

☞ No, it's like a process. It's an ebb and a flow. Any minority group is going to have to stand up and draw attention to their particular cause. The cultural and ethnic diversity conversation is basically of the same ilk, and we just ought to support each other. It's just standing up and being counted, and being identified. It's all happening. I don't feel like it's a distraction, it's an enhancement in a way.

You became good friends with Leonard Nimoy. What do you miss about him since his passing?

☞ I just miss him. I miss his voice, I miss the idea of calling him up and making a plan to have brunch or dinner. We spent a lot of time together. It's just the presence of someone that you care about deeply who's no longer in the world that I miss most.

You're a producer as well as an actor. Keeping busy?

☞ I've been saying "no" a lot lately, which is an interesting and different point of view for me. I feel like I got to this place in my career by saying "yes" a lot, and I'm grateful for that, but "no" can be an equally powerful answer. ●

Star Trek Beyond opens on 22 July.

Biodata

→ Occupation

Actor, producer

→ Born

2 June 1977

→ From

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

→ Greatest Hits

Heroes, *Star Trek*, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, *24*, *Hitman: Agent 47*

→ Random Fact

What scares Quinto?

"Cockroaches, nuclear apocalypse..."

“I MISS
THE IDEA
OF CALLING
LEONARD UP
AND MAKING
A PLAN”

What Did Harry Ever

Who would have thought a series of tales about a little boy who lived under a staircase in Little Whinging, Surrey, could have achieved so much? As JK Rowling's creation comes to the London stage, Jayne Nelson takes a look at how the boy wizard changed the world...





Potter

Do For Us?

1 Harry Potter... made reading books cool

We're not implying that before JK Rowling came along, children didn't read. But books weren't exactly *flaunted*; kids didn't necessarily feel comfortable reading in their lunch break or outside of class in case they'd be labelled a nerd or, if you went to school in the dark ages when we did, a "swot". But then along came Harry... and, gradually, not only could a child (or even an adult) whip a book out of their bag and start reading on the bus, someone might actually tap them on the shoulder and want to talk about the story. How amazing is that? Which leads us to...

Look: proof that children still read books!

2 Harry Potter... brought people together

Humanity is all about tribes, isn't it? People are happier when they're in one. Religion has its tribes. Football teams have their tribes. There are tribes for everything from knitting to My Little Pony. *Harry Potter's* tribe is a monster – bringing people of all ages, from all walks of life, from all corners of the planet, together. JK Rowling's books have been published in 200 territories; thanks to smuggled DVDs, children even know about them in a regime like North Korea. Just imagine the relationships that have been formed over the years – and how many babies must have been born because of Rowling's world.

3 Harry Potter... supported the British film industry

When Warner Bros first started work on the *Harry Potter* films they chose Leavesden Studios in Hertfordshire as their base, pumping all their efforts into making the site a superior resource for filmmakers. Thanks to this, a whopping £1.9 billion has been invested in our film industry from not only the *Potter* movies

but other productions that followed, such as *The Dark Knight*. Add to this the 3,000 to 4,000 people who worked on each of the *Potter* movies, the boost given to everything from cinema chains to merchandising, the Harry Potter Studio Tour set up at Leavesden in 2012 and the upcoming behemoth that is *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, and... well, you get our point. Kerching! →



Careful, Mark Williams! You're about to walk in front of a train!

GETTY (1) REX (1)



© JONNY DUDDLE

4 Harry Potter... raises money for good causes

"You have a moral responsibility when you've been given far more than you need, to do wise things with it and give intelligently." JK Rowling there, a billionaire who gave so much of her fortune to charity that she fell off the Forbes rich list. She helped set up Lumos, a charity helping disadvantaged children around the world; is the president of Gingerbread, which supports single parents (Rowling was once one, too, of course) and set up the Volant Charitable Trust to help causes close to her heart, such as MS research. All this practical action means that she has *genuinely* made the world a better place.

5 Harry Potter... pisses off fundamentalist religions

If you've written something that's annoyed an intolerant, prejudiced and downright unpleasant religious group, chances are you're doing something right. The *Harry Potter* series has been accused of promoting the occult so often that it even has its own Wikipedia page about it, but nothing stirred up the ire of radical wingnuts as much as Rowling declaring

And that is Daniel Radcliffe's exact inner structure on that t-shirt.

that Dumbledore was gay. After a joke about Dumbledore and Gandalf getting married in Ireland, the Westboro Baptist Church told Rowling that they would "picket" the wedding. Her reply? "Alas, the sheer awesomeness of such a union in such a place would blow your tiny bigoted minds out of your thick sloping skulls." Game, set, match.

6 Harry Potter... has united generations

Parents have been reading books to their children at bedtime since the very concept of both "books" and "bedtime" were invented, but the vast majority of those stories weren't necessarily ones the adult found interesting. And then along came *Potter* – a world so enticing to both young and old that it was packaged for kids *and* adults. For a while there was even a time in which grown-ups and nippers could discuss with equal excitement where the story would go next – and from this sprang reams of "Young Adult" fiction to continue the union of young and old. Now see point number 8... →

7 Harry Potter... introduced us to these guys

As well as starring the cream of the British film industry – from Alan Rickman to Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon to Jason Isaacs – the movies created megastars of its three young leads. While we do love Rupert Grint, most of our respect goes to Emma Watson and Daniel Radcliffe: the former for becoming a UN Goodwill Ambassador and speaking up for women's rights, and the latter for overcoming what could have been the worst typecasting in cinema history by choosing some truly bonkers projects since giving up his wand. From naked horse-bothering on stage in *Equus* to playing a farting corpse in *Swiss Army Man*, Radcliffe has become a bona-fide acting treasure.



Was it a love of beards that attracted them?

Making myopia fashionable.





Behind the Magic ⚡

Emma Matthewson was JK Rowling's editor when the *Harry Potter* books stormed the world. She remembers life inside a phenomenon...

What was your initial reaction when you read your first JK Rowling book?

⚡ I loved it right from the start – not only did it make me laugh, but it also had drama, action, magic, thrilling danger. The writing was so fluent, and in no way patronising. The bestselling series for children at the time was RL Stine's *Goosebumps* series; horror stories, very short, so very different! Our thoughts were how to break out this debut, brilliant writer when the bestselling books were so different.

Did you see her grow in confidence as a writer?

⚡ From the very beginning it struck me how confident and deft Jo always was in handling the world of *Harry Potter*, and marshalling her characters. Jo had such a wealth of information about the characters, of which only a small portion would appear in the books, with the rest gradually coming out in our conversations. Much to the delight of Jo's fans everywhere of course, this information has had opportunities to appear in so many different ways now, from Pottermore, to the films, to the play *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*! This confidence would allow us to have brilliant conversations as Jo would always have a good reason for why she had included something as she had the narratives for the seven books firmly in her mind. Or she would take up an editorial suggestion and weave it seamlessly into the narrative with consummate skill.

Was she very protective of her characters and world?

⚡ Only in a good way. Jo had such a strong vision; it's her story, her characters, after all. And working with an author who has a vision like that – it's wonderful.

How much of the story was mapped out, and how much conceived on a book by book basis?

⚡ Jo had a strong vision for all seven books, with a clear idea of the main storyline for each book. But she was confident enough to be able to change detail within that overarching structure, as the story developed. It's common knowledge now that details that might seem unimportant in one book would prove to have great significance later on. A true sign of a writer completely in command of their material.

What was behind the decision to package the books for adults as well as children?

⚡ It was anecdotal stories that we started hearing, about adults being a little embarrassed about reading a book nominally for children, but

clearly enjoying it and unable to stop – so reading it behind their newspaper on the morning commute. So we thought: why not make it easy for the adults? It was a true indication of how rich Jo's stories are, with their wide appeal for adults and children.

What was it like, riding that rollercoaster?

⚡ Such fun. Such an experience. I learned so much and felt very, very lucky.

How did you deal with the security issues when each new book came out?

⚡ If I told you about them I would have to kill you! I can say it did involve safes, security vans, subterfuge, midnight photocopying amongst other things. Not your average publishing process.

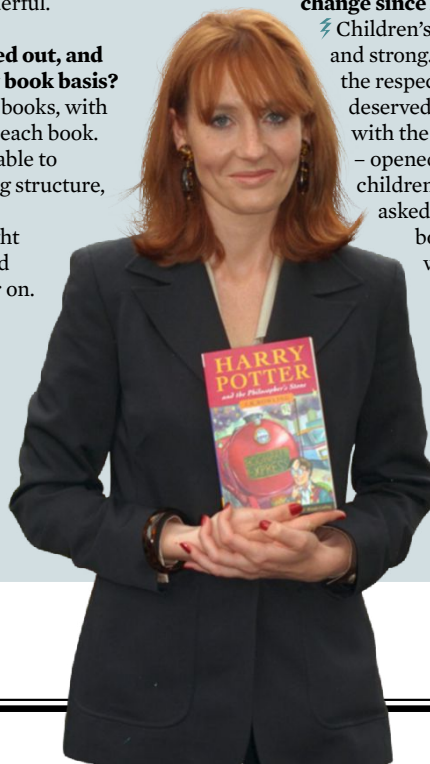
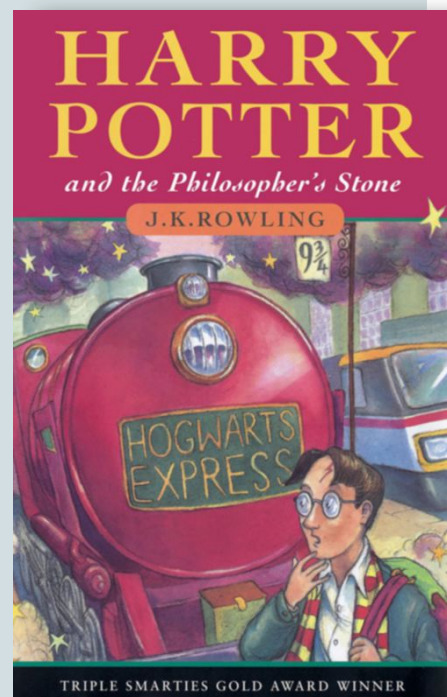
How have you seen the children's publishing industry change since *Harry Potter*?

⚡ Children's publishing has always been vibrant and strong. But I think perhaps not always given the respect or the acknowledgement that it deserved. I think Jo and *Harry Potter* – along with the other brilliant authors writing today – opened the world's eyes to the brilliance of children's books. For example, I am no longer asked: "When are you going to 'move on' to books for adults?" No disrespect to my wonderful adult editor colleagues!

Have any children given you feedback about how it's changed their life?

⚡ I heard so very many stories from children about how *Harry Potter* helped them fall in love with reading – to have been a part of that makes me feel enormously proud. A love of reading opens so very many doors.

Jayne Nelson



8 Harry Potter... created the Young Adult genre

Without *Harry Potter*, would we have *The Hunger Games*? *The Maze Runner* series? *Artemis Fowl*? The works of John Green? Even – wait for it – *Twilight*? We could go on and on, but you get the gist. Rowling single-handedly showed that books that cross the delicate line between “child” and “teenager”, not to mention the even more delicate line between “teenager” and “adult”, could not only be critically acclaimed but also financially lucrative. So lucrative, in fact, that the stories that followed leapt into cinemas just as her own books did. They’re such a huge part of our culture now that it’s hard to believe they’re still a relatively recent invention.



9 Harry Potter... created a new British mythology

JRR Tolkien did something extraordinary when he started whipping up all those adventures in Middle-earth in the '30s: he established an expansive fantasy universe that managed to not only combine mythologies from all around the world, but which ended up being almost stupefyingly *British*. And JK



But will that ink ever come off?



Now if one of those was radioactive and had bitten him...

Rowling, amazingly, did just the same with the *Potter* world. Harry's life at Hogwarts and beyond could not be more British if it tried, playing on everything from our school system to the vagaries of our swearing. The *Potterverse* is as British as James Bond, *Monty Python* and *Doctor Who* – and every time our little nation produces something as huge as this, we should be rightly, desperately proud.

10 Harry Potter... made the world a better place

If you want to see how the *Harry Potter* books have influenced generations of people, it's simple: go to Google (note: other search engines are available) and type in the phrase “Harry Potter changed my life”. You'll find page after page of stories about people who have found hope, solace, love, joy, comfort, peace and laughter after reading about the little boy with the lightning scar on his forehead. Rowling's books aren't just a children's fairytale; they're a moral guide, they're a beacon in the darkness, they're an actual *reason for living* for more people than we can count. They really did change the world, one person at a time. ☺

“And here's some stuff I was jotting down the other night.”



Harry Potter And The Cursed Child Fact File



How much do we know about the new *Potter* play, set 19 years after the Battle of Hogwarts? Here's a spoiler-free rundown...

The play started as a story by Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany, and has been adapted for the stage by Thorne – familiar to *SFX* readers as the man behind the wonderful TV show *The Fades*. He also adapted vampire drama *Let The Right One In* for the stage, so his “cool” credentials are high.

The official synopsis reads: “It was always difficult being *Harry Potter* and it isn't much easier now that he is an overworked employee of the Ministry of Magic, a husband, and father of three school-age children. While Harry grapples with a past that refuses to stay where it belongs, his youngest son Albus must struggle with the weight of a family legacy he never wanted. As past and present fuse ominously, both father and son learn the uncomfortable truth: sometimes, darkness comes from unexpected places.”

The casting contained one surprise: black actress Noma Dumezweni as Hermione. Naturally, racists complained.

“With my experience of social media, I thought that idiots were going to idiot,” said Rowling of the whingers. “But what can you say? That’s the way the world is. Noma was chosen because she was the best actress for the job.”

Cursed Child is split into two parts, so audiences either have to watch them both on the same day or on two consecutive evenings. Mind you, this is a moot point, as it's sold out for the next year at least; it broke records by selling 175,000 tickets in 24 hours. Thankfully, you can also buy the script, released on 31 July – the day after the Palace Theatre previews end and the show officially begins.

Audiences have been asked to “#KeepTheSecrets” by Rowling, who calls anyone who spills spoilers “Wormtails” after the books’ double-crossing rat. We’ll respect her wishes, but *will* let slip that the play features impressive effects and the first part ends on a whopping cliffhanger... Read our review on p116.



GETTY (3) REX (1)

FANTAST

AND WHERE

Unleash the blockbusters! Your essential guide to 15

MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN

TIM BURTON'S LATEST FREAK SHOW IS ON ITS WAY

Eternal champion of the misfit Tim Burton is back with another call to arms for society's outsiders. Based on the bestselling novel by Ransom Riggs – a book inspired by a true-life cache of creepy vintage photographs – it's the tale of a houseful of orphans gifted with extraordinary powers.



"Someone actually asked me in an interview two years ago, 'If there was one director you could work with, who would it be?'" star Asa Butterfield tells *SFX*. "And I said 'Tim Burton'. A few months later I get a script, with the words 'Directed by Tim Burton' on it... I'm like, 'God, this is it!'"

"It's a real Tim movie, if you know what I mean. It's totally up his street. He'll do a better job than anyone else of capturing this world, which is surreal and fantastical and also gothic and weird. And that's just Tim!"

Butterfield plays Jacob, a seemingly ordinary boy caught in the battle between Miss Peregrine's extraordinary brood and the creatures hunting them. He's joined by rising star Ella Purnell, Samuel L. Jackson and, as the enigmatic, shape-shifting mistress of the orphanage, Eva Green.

"This movie is all about individuality," says Butterfield. "It shows how the kids learn to show off their individuality, their peculiarity, and what makes them different. Nowadays people are shunned for being different. This movie flips that on its head. It says embrace your differences. Make the most of them. These people form a family because they're all outcasts." **Nick Setchfield**

Beats taking the dog for a walk.



IC FILMS TO FIND THEM

unmissable movies soon to be released into the wild...



A MONSTER CALLS

Out: 6 January

● JA Bayona (*The Orphanage*) has just been handed the keys to the *Jurassic World* sequel but first he adapts a Carnegie Medal-bagging children's book by Patrick Ness (who wrote the screenplay, too). We're promised an unsettling fantasy about death and the power of story with Liam Neeson as an arboreal boogeyman.

MORGAN

Out: 2 September

● Plucked from Hollywood's fabled Black List of the greatest unmade screenplays, this has the potential to be this year's *Ex Machina*: a morally-loaded tale of a lab-bred artificial being and their right to life. *The Witch's* Anya Taylor-Joy stars and Luke Scott – son of Ridley, no less – directs.



Just your usual Tim Burton cast...



Wait till London Transport hear about this!

THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS

M.R. CAREY'S HORROR TALE GOES WIDESCREEN

The bestselling zombie novel with a big chewy heart is coming to the big screen, directed by *Peaky Blinders* and *Doctor Who*'s Colm McCarthy.

With an unusually plant-based take on zombie infection, it focuses on 11-year-old Melanie, who has retained her intelligence despite being infected and might be the key to finding a cure. She's taken on a dangerous trip to the UK's last remaining city by teacher Miss Justineau (Gemma Arterton), soldier Sgt Parks (Paddy Considine) and scientist Dr Caldwell (Glenn Close), who'd very much like to dissect Melanie to find out how she ticks.

"Every time I watch it I feel this ridiculous, complete happiness," says author MR Carey, who wrote the book and the screenplay concurrently. "For ten months I was just living

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in that world, being immersive, and both the novel and the movie screenplay benefitted from that. The novel became more visual and in the movie the interior life of the characters comes across more clearly."

Carey is delighted with the film's impressive cast ("I had no idea that [actors of that calibre] were even an option"), not least Close, whose depiction of Dr Caldwell is "so self-possessed and so scary and so imposing".

The film won't be a slavish copy of the book, with the Junkers characters being cut because, on screen, they "felt like they wandered in out of *Mad Max*". But Carey promises us that the book's sharper edges haven't been blunted for the film. "We didn't tone anything down," he tells *SFX*. "The ending is very faithful to the book." **Abigail Chandler**



It's the Cumberbatch once more.



DOCTOR STRANGE

STRANGE DAYS FOR THE MCU

Doctor Strange is more than just a movie. It's an almighty summoning spell, cracking open reality itself and unleashing all manner of dark forces and occult phenomena into the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Seriously, people, cast a protective hex while you can – this is the stuff they don't tell their shareholders...

Yes, the introduction of Earth's Sorcerer Supreme unlocks a whole new vault of comic book mythology, from mind-melting mystical realms – the Astral Plane and the 13th Dimension are just begging for the big screen – to a demonic pantheon of potential villains, from Blackheart to D'Spayre, Mephisto to Baphomet.

It's also a chance to explore Marvel's colourful roster of supernatural heroes. Perhaps future films will see Benedict Cumberbatch team with the likes of vampiric 'tec Hannibal King, witches Wiccan and Pixie,

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fellow sorcerer Brother Voodoo or even Daimon Hellstrom, the Son of Satan, a trident-wielding exorcist trying to step out from his dad's horned shadow. Great concepts, great visuals:

perfect cinema.

And if Marvel want an eldritch take on the Guardians of the Galaxy then who better than '90s faves the Midnight Sons – or even '70s superteam the Legion of Monsters, an uneasy alliance of such macabre misfits as Man-Thing, Ghost Rider and Morbius the Living Vampire. In the comics Doc himself led the Avengers of the Supernatural, a magical spin on Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

We probably won't see the studio's icons reimagined as the rotting, flesh-crazed Marvel Zombies... But then who thought a talking raccoon and a walking tree would ever front a blockbuster? **Nick Setchfield**

RINGS

Out: 4 November

● As the *Paranormal Activity* franchise shutters, Paramount needs another horror cash-cow – and it's clearly hoping that this, the third entry in the stateside translation of Japan's *Ring* saga, will deliver. Thirteen – count 'em – years after the original, a bunch of college students share Samara's cursed tape. The crazy, doomed loons.

PASSENGERS

Out: 23 December

● The combined star wattage of Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt power this interplanetary romance from *The Imitation Game*'s Morten Tyldum. It's a classic tale of love among the malfunctioning cryogenic chambers of a generational starship. Boy defrosts girl etc. Sony clearly have faith in this one as a Christmas blockbuster.



REX (3)

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

MAGIC FINALLY GETS A PASSPORT

Eddie Redmayne continues his quest to unseat Mr Cumberbatch as “that British actor you see bloody everywhere” with this adaptation of JK Rowling’s titular book. The original tome, a bestiary of magical creatures used by Harry Potter at Hogwarts, was written by a wizard named Newt Scamander in 1927 and detailed the creatures he’d studied in his world travels. The film, written by Rowling and directed by *Potter* veteran David Yates, shows us what Redmayne’s Scamander actually got up to when he wasn’t scribbling down important factoids about Fwoopers and Puffskeins.

However, the biggest twist comes with the setting. After eight movies set in the British school system, the action has moved across the pond to Prohibition-era New York – the first time Rowling’s world has visited our American



cousins. Indeed, given her books’ popularity worldwide, it miffed many readers that so little was mentioned about other nations: magic wasn’t exclusively a European thing, after all. *Fantastic Beasts* gives us the chance to

find out how wizards and witches are treated elsewhere – Rowling even posted a magical history of North America on her Pottermore site to get us ready for the film. (And yes, there were real witches burned at Salem...)

So the lure of *Fantastic Beasts* is the chance to follow a British wizard (plus his mysterious, creature-filled briefcase) to the USA and make the *Potter* brand even *bigger*. The magical community he meets there include Jon Voight, Ron Perlman and Ezra Miller – and given Scamander’s globe-trotting, if this is a hit there could be many more movie travelogues to come. **Jayne Nelson**

Shifting luggage around has never been more thrilling.

Don't do it! Life's
worth living!

ASSASSIN'S CREED

BACK IN THE HOOD

In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death, taxes and the inevitability that any big-screen videogame adaptation is guaranteed to be bobbins. *Assassin's Creed* is looking to change that, precisely because director Justin Kurzel *isn't* approaching it as a videogame adaptation. "It's an incredible, visceral experience playing the game," Kurzel tells *SFX*. "I know it's deeply, deeply loved, and with that comes a responsibility to find the true DNA of the brand, but at the same time it has to be different from the game in terms of a cinematic experience."

The film's tale does take its cue from the first game, however, and sees Michael Fassbender's Callum Lynch saved from death row by Sophia Rikkin (Marion Cotillard) and Abstergo industries – creators of the Animus, a machine that allows people to relive the memories of their ancestors. Utilising the Animus, Callum travels back to 15th century Spain, where his freerunning, neck-stabbing assassin ancestor Aguilar locks horns with local Templars in pursuit of a powerful artefact.

Kurzel, Fassbender and Cotillard previously collaborated on 2015's rapturously-received Shakespeare adap *Macbeth*, and with Fassbender serving as producer for the first time here he was responsible for putting the band back together. But as someone who happily admits to only playing the game "recently" what drew him to the world of the hooded brotherhood? "I just thought that was a really cool concept to start from," Fassbender tells us. "I wanted to take an audience on a fantasy ride; give them something that sits itself in some sort of scientific theory. It's an exciting challenge." **Jordan Farley**

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THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE

Out: 10 February

● Still bummed out by the misery-storm of *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Studio Executive Reshuffle?* Fear not: the not-so-Dark Knight returns in swivel-limbed brick form in this 3D computer-animated extension of 2014's unexpectedly sharp *The Lego Movie*. Ralph Fiennes may even out-snoot Jeremy Irons as faithful Alfred.



Matthew McConaughey suitably attired for his part.

REX (1)

GOD PARTICLE

Out: 24 February

● Producer JJ Abrams promises to deliver the most high concept disaster movie ever here, riffing on Stephen Hawking's warning that messing with the Higgs boson could trigger a "catastrophic vacuum delay" and wipe out the Earth. *Lawks!* Gugu Mbatha-Raw, David Oyelowo and Elizabeth Debicki lead this quantum thriller.

THE DARK TOWER

THE RETURN OF THE KING

It took Peter Jackson three marathon movies to bring *The Lord Of The Rings* "unfilmable" 1,300-or-so pages to cinematic glory, so spare a thought for Danish director Nikolaj Arcel, whose job is to condense a total of 3,824 pages (volumes dependent) of Stephen King's seven-book magnum opus into a single film. And that not insignificant task conveniently ignores the saga's recent eighth entry (a further 355 pages) and the dozens of King novels inexorably tethered to the series' wider plot.

It's therefore more realistic to consider 2017's *The Dark Tower* less as a retelling of King's complete post-apocalyptic Western and more an adapted novella taking part in its universe; quite possibly one that's set after the conclusion of the final book if a recent tweet by

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Stephen King is to be taken at face value. With the increasingly in-demand Idris Elba wearing the cowboy boots of wandering gunslinger Roland Deschain, and Matthew McConaughey cast as his diabolical adversary the Man in Black, the pieces are in place for this to be one of the most memorable films based on King's works. Elba's the perfect actor to play a role originally modelled on Clint Eastwood's *Man With No Name*, and while the lone movie's running time means that the appearance of Roland's full Ka-Tet is highly questionable, even a slender visit to the deserts of Mid-World and its cauldron of magic, monsters and maniacal machines should be more than enough to double up as a doorway through which a new audience is drawn to seek out the full *Dark Tower* saga. **Matthew Pellett**



Better than what
you wear to work.

POWER RANGERS

IT'S MORPHIN' TIME!

While some summer blockbusters opt to go down the road of maximum dourness (*Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, we're looking at you), don't expect the same tone from *Power Rangers* – the upcoming movie reboot of the spandex-draped kids television show.

"This is more of an Amblin sort of experience," says director Dean Israelite, on set in Vancouver. "There's a real sense of adventure and fun. To me this is a love story between five kids who start off in their own worlds, but who find each other. There's a joy and a buoyancy to the movie."

"The journey of these five teens becoming the Power Rangers and the journey of them growing up are one and the same. To me, what's been exciting about the movie from the very first draft that I read has been that this is just a metaphor for these kids finding out who they are."

That doesn't mean it won't be high on adventure and spectacle, however. Villainous alien sorceress Rita Repulsa (Elizabeth Banks) is back and intent on stirring up trouble with the help of her army of Putties – cue lots of kicking and punching, no doubt. "Everything has a bigness and richness to it that I think

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audiences in 2017 really need and appreciate," says Israelite. "This is completely inspired by *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* – the very first season, the one I saw as a kid. It's reimagined and reinvented in ways, but it captures the spirit of what was in that show but brings it to a 2017 audience in a new, next generation way." **Will Salmon**



And here's them before
a visit to their tailors.

KONG: SKULL ISLAND

Out: 10 March

● Cinema's primal monster returns to home turf but this isn't yet another rehash. A grittier, more militarised take, it shifts the action from '30s New York to the 'Nam era and adds Tom Hiddleston, Brie Larson and Samuel L. Jackson to the mix. Director Jordan Vogt-Roberts pledges "the biggest Kong there's ever been... a 100-foot ape."

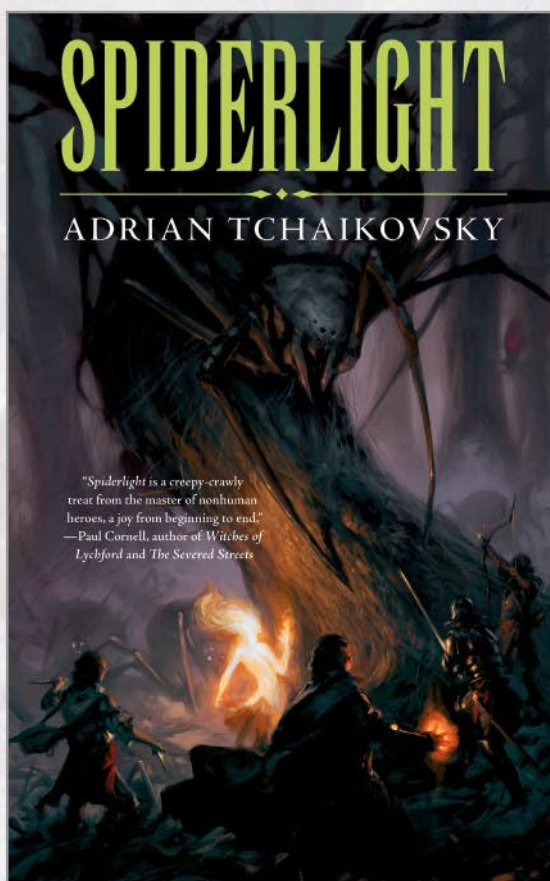
GHOST IN THE SHELL

Out: 31 March

● Delivering another action lead for Scarlett Johansson as she waits patiently for the *Black Widow* solo movie, this adap of Japan's definitive cyberpunk manga is already dogged by accusations of ethnic inauthenticity. ScarJo's the Major, a cyborg heading up an elite taskforce battling tech-threats and sci-crime.



STORIES AT THE RIGHT LENGTH



Spiderlight

"Spiderlight is a creepy-crawly treat from the master of nonhuman heroes, a joy from beginning to end."

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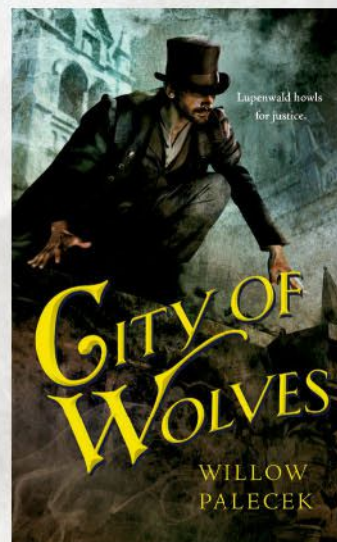
— GEEK SYNDICATE



Nightshades

"Every time I read one of her books I have the uncontrollable urge to share my love of her work with anybody who will listen."

—CHARLES DE LINT



City of Wolves

"A tantalizing glimpse of an interesting imagined world."



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Disney is reimagining a '70s fave with extra soul and state of the art FX. Tara Bennett meets

← **PETE'S DRAGON** →

DRAGON

HEART



Some say the '70s was Disney's forgotten decade, overshadowed by the golden eras either side of it. But the House of Mouse had a prolific, inventive run of movies back then, from ambitious SF epic *The Black Hole* to a live-action musical featuring an animated dragon...

While *Pete's Dragon* was a modest success at the time, it never received the critical acclaim that met *Mary Poppins*, another live action-animated hybrid. Nor does it have the cross-generational nostalgia of that Julie Andrews classic. So in 2010 Disney targeted this boy-and-his-dragon tale as part of the back-catalogue that might be ripe for reinvention. They stripped the musical aspect from its DNA and asked writers to pitch them new takes. Indie director/writer David Lowery, best known for *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*, was one who heeded the call.

A long-time Disney fan, Lowery tells *SFX* he saw the original film when he was six – but he hasn't re-watched it, even to this day. "It's not one of the crown jewels of their library," Lowery says of the 1977 version. "It's beloved by many people, but it's not so beloved that you can't take it and run. I saw it as an opportunity to tell a new story."

The producers agreed. "The mandate from the studio was, 'We want to make a movie called *Pete's Dragon*. It has to have a boy named Pete in it... and a dragon. That's it. They had →

been thinking about it for a while, but they didn't have a goal to have it in theatres by 2016. They were more of the opinion that if the right story came along, and the right storytelling, it would be worth doing."

Lowery spent a year writing the script with collaborator Toby Halbrooks, aiming to create a timeless story with Pete and the dragon's friendship at the centre. Set in the Pacific Northwest in the early '80s, Lowery's script finds four-year-old Pete becoming separated from his family on a camping trip and spending the next six years in the woods with Elliott, his dragon companion and protector. At 10, he's discovered by a park ranger named Grace, who takes Pete back to civilisation.

"It's about finding your home and where you belong, which is what all of my movies are about," Lowery confesses with a smile. "Coming from a strong family, that's always been important to me. Over the course of three movies, I've realised they are all about that, and it's the heart of this one too."

Disney loved the script. "I think they were surprised by how much we brought to it, and they were so surprised they made the movie," Lowery laughs.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

They also offered him the opportunity to direct, forcing Lowery to make a very personal decision. "The last thing I wanted was to go and make a studio movie where I didn't get to make my own movie," he tells *SFX*, frankly. "I didn't want to just be that guy who has one indie film and then goes and makes anonymous, mainstream summer movies for the rest of his career. It's not what I seek to do. So I spent a year writing the script thinking



Playing "fetch" with this guy is a whole lot of fun...

someone else would make it. But I can't help make everything I write very much me, so over the course of the year it kind of turned into my movie. I was developing another movie at the same time [that I planned] to direct. I reached a Sophie's Choice moment where I could have made that one, which was much smaller and independent, but the truth was this one felt more meaningful to me."

Lowery says he has no regrets about choosing to wrangle a dragon. "Doing this one was unpredictable and it pushed me creatively. Despite the fact that it was much bigger and a different audience and with a studio, it still felt like the movie, as a filmmaker, I wanted to make."

Shooting on location in New Zealand,

"I hope people who love the original love it, but if they don't, I understand"

Lowery used local visual FX house Weta Digital to create Elliott the dragon, a fully computer-animated character. Lowery's take subtly references 1977's 2D animated Elliott but it was the director's beloved cats that influenced the new design the most.

"There's a scene where Elliott wakes up in a cave, and every behaviour is based explicitly on my cat waking up," Lowery laughs. "Overall, Elliott needed to feel like an animal, in the sense that he needed to be cuddly, warm and appealing, or fierce when he's protective, but with a level of intelligence beyond a dog or a cat. And he needed to have a sense of empathy that was deep and equivocal to Pete's. He's like a very, very smart dolphin."

This dragon has a tradition-busting layer of fur and Lowery had other specific design needs, too. "The shape of his head was really important to me. It had to be oversized and his jaw really big so there would be a clumsiness about him, and he would compensate by being very delicate and gentle. He can get furious and roar, but he's a very gentle dragon."

Lowery handed his initial sketches over to the design team, who refined the final look that was then passed to Weta to craft in three-dimensions. "They took the designs and figured



Now that's a life guard.

STATE OF GRACE

Bryce Dallas Howard talks her new creature feature

out how to make him work as a real creature. There were changes – the arms got smaller and the wings needed to get bigger for him to actually be airborne.”

While Lowery's proud of Elliott as a technical achievement, he's even more thrilled about the performance Weta created to play against human co-star Oakes Fegley. “The thing I wanted to give kids [in this movie] is not being afraid to get sad and profound with the emotional journey Pete goes on,” Lowery explains. “I remember having very complex feelings as a kid, and movies are a vehicle for audiences of all ages to contextualise emotions. So we wanted to make sure we brought more life into Elliott, and we see him make decisions and see him having feelings as well.

“Elliott needed to be able to relate with Pete on a very meaningful level,” Lowery continues. “He can't talk but I think that's good. I think you get a lot out of non-verbal communication. Since he can't talk, Pete doesn't feel the need to talk to him, but you feel this incredibly deep connection because there are no words to get in the way. They are equal, so there's no sense that Pete takes care of Elliott, or Elliott takes care of Pete.”

ROAR POWER

Satisfied with the interaction between a child actor and a CGI dragon, Lowery could then lean on the rest of his human cast, including Robert Redford, Karl Urban and Bryce Dallas Howard, to land the film's emotional journey. Lowery particularly praises Howard's take on Grace. “I've loved Bryce since *The Village*,” he enthuses. “But when she started having her own children, she gained this warmth that's very maternal and beautiful. Because Pete, by all accounts, is having a pretty awesome time living in the woods with a dragon, you have to give him something to actually make him want to come to town. Because he's the age he is, it's family and home, and above all, a mother. Bryce was able to represent that quality so beautifully. Grace and Pete is a defining relationship of the film.”

Lowery tells SFX he's proud of the throwback vibe they've achieved. The film's period setting purposely keeps today's technology out of the story and allows children to slip into the magic of believing with Pete. “I really hope kids aren't too cynical these days,” he says of the film's impending reception. “I hope people who love the original love it, but if they don't, I understand. At the same time, it's not going to ruin the old movie for them because it's so different. Hopefully, they'll love this one too. And for kids who have never seen the old one, they will grow up with this one.” ●

Pete's Dragon opens on 12 August.



But is she wearing high heels?

You've had two big summer movies in a row with *Jurassic World* and now *Pete's Dragon*. Are there any connections between the women you played in each?

👉 Claire and Grace are very different people but they both have intimate relationships with giant reptiles [laughs].

You've said you really pushed to be cast in *Pete's Dragon*. How did you go about it?

👉 I asked to see the script secretly with my agents because I was curious. I loved the original *Pete's Dragon* and I was like, “What are they doing?” When I read it, I realised it was a departure. I thought it was beautiful and innocent. I told my agents I'd like to be considered for the role. Six months went by and I got a call from [the producer] that he wanted to offer the part to me. On the spot, I came out and said, “Yes, I want to do this.”

The film has a timeless quality to it, with the year its set and the remote forest settings. Did you embrace that vibe?

👉 Yes! Initially, I didn't know the movie would be set somewhere in the early '80s. As I became more aware of the intentions around that, I never brought my cell phone on set. I wanted to be in that world. A quieter, more simple world.

Pete has a very distinct journey, but what is Grace's?

👉 My joke has been “It's a film about a boy and his dragon... and I'm in it too!” But for me, the subtle part of Grace's journey was the story of a woman becoming a parent. This is what it takes for her to become a mother. In becoming a mother, you need to believe in the impossible and things you can't see, like your own child growing inside you.

Tara Bennett



With Robert Redford, who plays Grace's father.



HEROES & INSPIRATIONS

NICOLAS WINDING REFN

The provocative director reveals some surprising passions to Ian Berriman

To date, Nicolas Winding Refn's career has only occasionally seen him tacking towards *SFX* territory, but it wouldn't be too much of a shock if the future saw him becoming a more regular visitor to our far-flung shores. Over the last few years the Danish-born director of *Drive* has spoken enthusiastically about bringing Wonder Woman or Batgirl to the big screen, and toyed with remakes of *Logan's Run* and *Barbarella*. And his latest film, the ultra-stylish *The Neon Demon*, sees him gleefully splashing about in the horror genre.

Refn is clearly a cinephile, having lent his name to the likes of a high-end book of movie posters and a range of vinyl soundtrack reissues. So it's something of a surprise to learn that he seems to have stumbled into this line of work. "I never wanted to be a filmmaker," he says. "I didn't seek it out. I didn't go to film school. But then film found me."

Equally surprising – and delightful – is the discovery that his tastes encompass everything from the grittiest video nasty to the most heart-warming fantasy... and that he's unexpectedly au fait with British telly. "*Bottom* – that show was so funny! Rik Mayall was just so outrageously offensive!"

THE TV REMOTE CONTROL

✦ As a kid I was very dyslexic – I didn't actually learn to read until I was 13. So creativity was something that I enjoyed, but I wasn't particularly good at it. I wish I was! I loved TV, though. I guess because I could change the image with a remote control, and I thought that was such a beautiful thing. I love that idea of being able to control your own flow of images. That to me was inspiring and interesting.

THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE

✦ I grew up in Copenhagen, so there wasn't a lot of things around. But then we moved to the States when I was eight, and that was a huge jump. I really liked *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. I saw that when I was 14 years old. I had seen films in a more conventional form, and here was something that was so radically different in all aspects. It was very inspiring to see, "Oh, you can do *that*."

BELGIAN COMICS

✦ I grew up in New York from eight to 17, and I remember buying a lot of comic books. I couldn't read them, so I just bought them for what the pictures were! It was very different from the Scandinavian comic culture. There was a comic called *Blake And Mortimer*, about a

British professor who goes on these adventures. That was made in Belgium, and was pretty good. I liked Tintin when I was little too.

BLAKE'S 7

✦ I generally really love British sci-fi, because the UK point of view always had a much darker tone to it than a lot of the American fluff – it's not utopian. I saw *Blake's 7* because I was visiting England at the time when it was airing. I never saw the whole series, I just saw three or four episodes, but god, they were so imaginative and so exciting. And they had those rayguns!

DOCTOR WHO

✦ I loved *Doctor Who* too – I'm a big Tom Baker guy. I haven't seen the later ones, I don't really know what happened to it, but I found it very terrifying when I was little. I loved the theme tune: dah-da-da, dah-da-da! I even tried to get a *Doctor Who* directing gig, but they didn't want me. I don't know why – I thought they would have been flattered.

TERENCE FISHER

✦ I think Terence Fisher [director of Hammer horrors such as *The Curse Of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Mummy*] is very underrated →



Leatherface going on a *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.



Blake's 7: the capture of Travis (not the band).

“My favourite film is *It's A Wonderful Life*, I see it every Christmas Eve”

– I don't think he's got the recognition that he deserves, and I always thought that was a shame. People dismiss him by saying, “Oh, he's only as good as the scripts, he didn't bring a whole lot,” but I very much disagree. I think that his Hammer films are incredibly imaginative. Of course, everything was handed over to him by Hammer, but those movies are photographed and designed in such a specific way. It's similar to Terence Young doing the first couple of James Bond movies – he clearly created that whole brand, and designed the whole Bond aura. For me, Terence Fisher did that the exact same way with Hammer. I mean, I know back then it was different and people were more like craftsmen, but I think there's a much more interesting filmmaker there.

ANDY MILLIGAN

✎ I like Andy Milligan's films, but that doesn't mean that anybody else would! I guess it's more my personal obsession. I collect him. He's pretty crazy. Andy Milligan was one of those filmmakers that maybe wasn't very talented, but he needed to express himself, so everything around him just became really insane. And he made all kinds of movies. My favourite is *Fleshpot On 42nd Street*.

THE PRISONER

✎ *The Prisoner* is my favourite TV show of all time. It's the ultimate nightmare that was ever made on television – nothing has been made since that is so peculiar and so singular. And it all came from Patrick McGeehan. First he made this other spy show [*Danger Man*] which was more conventional. And then he goes off and makes this completely deranged, surrealistic, existentialist television show. You

can't imagine someone doing that now – not in such a crazy way – because everything in television now is so corporate, and is regulated very much. They only did one season, then that was it – and it doesn't even really have a solution. It truly is a bizarre show. I think it's just marvellous.

CURTIS HARRINGTON

✎ There's a director called Curtis Harrington who I think is still very underappreciated. I'm a big fan of *Night Tide* – it's one of my favourites. It stars Dennis Hopper and is about someone who falls in love with a mermaid. I just really love that movie. I actually bought the rights to the film – I own the negative. *Queen Of Blood* is an amazing film too, but Curtis Harrington also went on and did some other really funky stuff. I was lucky enough to be friendly with him before he passed away.

JACQUES TOURNEUR

✎ Tourneur is another director who deserves much more credit. Everyone talks about [producer] Val Lewton because he initiated a lot of the horror films that Tourneur directed – *Cat People*, *I Walked With A Zombie*. But he's probably one of the most influential filmmakers. I very much like him. He's really groovy.

FRANK CAPRA

✎ My favourite film is *It's A Wonderful Life*. I see it every year at Christmas Eve, routinely, like clockwork. I always remember the end of the movie, where Jimmy Stewart runs after the angel, Clarence, and says, “Clarence, please! I want to live again! I want to live again!” I think that's probably the most powerful moment ever captured on film. We all want to live! ●

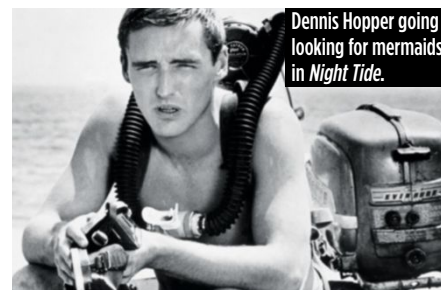
The Neon Demon is in cinemas nationwide now.



Terence Fisher, one of Hammer's greatest.



The Prisoner: still looking good after nearly 50 years.



Dennis Hopper going looking for mermaids in *Night Tide*.

REX (2)

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To Book

BLAKE CROUCH

The creator of *Wayward Pines* tells us about his new novel

Words by Jonathan Wright

There are moments in life when you just decide to go for it. For Blake Crouch, one such moment came in the wake of his *Wayward Pines* trilogy, when he decided to write a novel exploring ideas rooted in quantum mechanics. “I just decided fuck it, I’m going to do the research, and I’m going to write this next book because I want to do something that’s even bigger and more challenging,” he says.

The result is *Dark Matter*, a hi-tech SF thriller that was “terribly daunting” to research. “Quantum mechanics is one of those things the further down the rabbit hole you go, the further down the rabbit hole you go, and it can tend to bog down in incomprehensible equations,” says Crouch. “I was just spinning out on how I would wrap my head around understanding a very complicated field of science and then figure a way to use it as the basis for a commercial thriller without putting off my audience.”

The sheer weirdness of the subject was the major problem. “On a very basic level, quantum physics is the study of how particles behave on a subatomic level,” says Crouch. “It seems like what does that have to do with our day-to-day lives?” Not much, you might think, considering how weird the world turns out to be when viewed at this level, slippery, strange and somehow indistinct when compared with the certainties of a Newtonian view of the universe.

OTHER WORLDS

For Crouch, a breakthrough came when he saw a TED talk given by experimental physicist Aaron O’Connell, said to have created the world’s first quantum machine. Crouch hit on the notion of “scaling up the ramifications of quantum mechanics” as they relate to the idea of the multiverse, the idea there are lots of parallel universes. Enter Jason Dessen, a modestly successful physics teacher who finds himself transported to an alternate world, where his doppelganger is a successful research scientist.

“It’s pretty heavy stuff for me this time out,” says Crouch. “It’s about reality and identity, and an exploration of the paths not taken.” It’s also a love story, because Dessen the teacher longs to return to his family. “I thought I was just starting out to write a harder sci-fi thriller, and it ended up having so much more heart than I originally expected,” says Crouch, “but then of course it needed to.”

By this he means that it’s not possible to explore such arcane ideas without offering readers memorable characters and proper jeopardy. Crouch’s words also reveal a new ambition in his writing, which makes it an intriguing time to take stock of the career of someone who’s found

cross-media success as both the publishing and TV industries have undergone huge changes.

In terms of publishing, Crouch always knew he wanted to be a novelist. “In elementary school, I would tell my brother scary bedtime stories, try to scare the shit out of him,” he remembers. After writing a family epic heavily influenced by Pat Conroy (*The Prince Of Tides*) and that was “just all over the place”, he was first published in 2004, with psychological horror *Desert Places* (St Martin’s Press) but his career never quite took off.

With the rise of ebooks, he turned to self-publishing, re-releasing his own early novels electronically. “They started doing really, really well,” he says. “And then I had a new book that I couldn’t get published, *Run*. I got a new agent and we tried to get it published here in America, and I got a bunch of glowing rejections from publishers, and I thought, ‘You know I’m having some success self-publishing so I’m going to self-publish this new novel.’”

TOWN WITH SECRETS

The book was a bestseller and Crouch subsequently partnered with Amazon via its Thomas & Mercer mystery imprint for the *Twin Peaks*-influenced *Wayward Pines* trilogy, in which a US Secret Service Agent finds himself in strange situations in a strange town.

The books attracted the attention of producer Chad Hodge, who was looking for ideas to develop in the emerging world of boxset TV. Hodge suggested selling the series via a pilot script, which he subsequently wrote. Director M Night Shyamalan and Matt Dillon became attached to the project. *Wayward Pines* was a huge hit for Fox.

Fast forward, and Crouch and Hodge have been working on a new series, based on Crouch’s Letty Dobesh novella series about a junkie felon. Michelle Dockery is starring. “We wrote the pilot script together and sold it in a very similar way that we sold *Wayward Pines*,” says Crouch. “Michelle had just wrapped up *Downton Abbey* and was looking for her next thing. This seemed like it, because she’s going from wearing corsets and speaking incredibly proper English to smoking meth out of a lightbulb. It’s going to be a pretty dramatic shift.”

So should fans of Crouch’s books worry that we’re losing him to TV? Not at all. While he’s grateful to have two series in production, he’s also craving some solitude, some space to come up with new ideas. “What I am at heart is a novelist,” he says, “and I don’t want to lose sight of that.” ●

Dark Matter is out on 11 August and reviewed on p106.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born

→ 1978

From

→ Statesville, North Carolina

Greatest Hits

→ *The Wayward Pines* novels

– *Pines* (2012), *Wayward* (2013) and *The Last Town* (2014) – spawned a hit TV series.

Random Fact

→ Crouch grew up in “an almost Steven Spielberg-style suburban neighbourhood” and was partly homeschooled. “I learnt to be alone and to be okay with my own company.”



A black and white close-up portrait of actor Jake Gyllenhaal. He has shoulder-length dark hair and a light beard, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. He is wearing a dark, textured sweater. The background is dark and out of focus.

BROUGHT TO BOOK
BLAKE CROUCH

“IT ENDED
UP HAVING
SO MUCH MORE
HEART THAN
I ORIGINALLY
EXPECTED”

SCREAM!

Shut down in its prime,
Scream! could have been the Galaxy's
Greatest Horror Comic. Stephen Jewell reports

With its “Not for the nervous” tagline and its otherworldly, fictional editor, *Scream!* was clearly intended as a horror-themed equivalent to *2000 AD*. Described by John Wagner – who penned two of its most popular offerings, *Monster* and *The Thirteenth Floor*, with his then-regular writing partner, Alan Grant – as “merger fodder”, IPC’s attempt to launch a new boys’ anthology comic proved remarkably short-lived. Debuting in late March 1984, *Scream!* lasted only 15 issues before it was combined with *Eagle* just over three months later.

But its stories – boasting work by such top British talent as Brendan McCarthy, Cam Kennedy, Ron Smith and even Alan Moore – have lingered in the memories of those who read the original weekly. Indeed, *The Dracula File* and *The Thirteenth Floor* have recently been reprinted by Hibernia Press, while Rebellion will this month release a collection of *Scream!*’s most acclaimed strip, *Monster*.

Having previously overseen *Roy Of The Rovers* in 1976 and then 1982’s warmly received revival of *Eagle*, IPC Boys’ Adventure Group editor Barrie Tomlinson was charged with bringing *Scream!* to macabre life. “I was happy doing what I was doing but the management wanted to put out a horror comic, so I was pleased to oblige,” he says. “It was a chance for me to do something different, and despite what some management thought, the end product was a good one.”

Promoting former *Eagle* assistant editor Ian



Rimmer to the top job on *Scream!*, Tomlinson insists that the new title never consciously emulated *2000 AD*’s winning formula.

“It didn’t cross my mind, as I always created comics as I wanted them, and I was seldom influenced by events elsewhere,” he says, although he did hire *Battle* artist Mike Western to design the Tharg-esque Ghastly McNasty’s suitably gruesome, hooded visage. “I knew that he’d come up with just what we needed.”

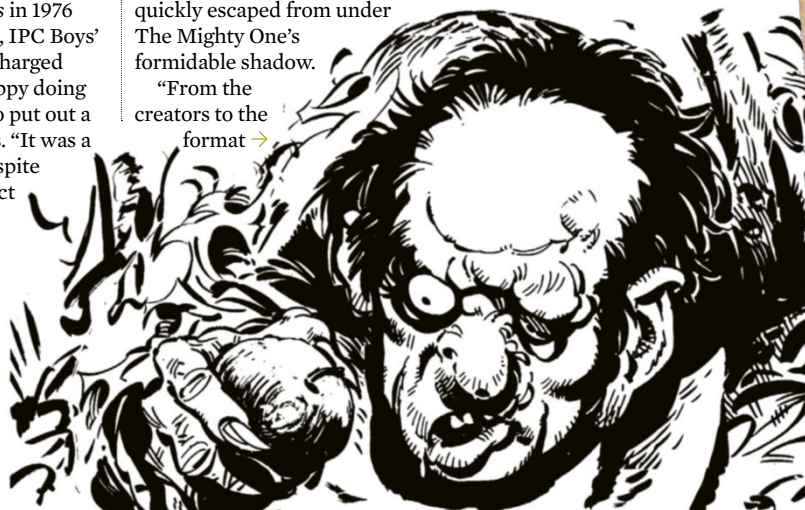
Rimmer was responsible for Ghastly McNasty’s catchy moniker. “There were images for a character who would be *Scream!*’s editorial figurehead, but no sense of personality or name for him,” he recalls. “For some reason I

recalled the name of a band from my teenage years in Liverpool in the ’70s, who were called Filthy McNasty. I tweaked it a bit and came up with Ghastly McNasty.”

Having joined IPC as a trainee competition journalist in 1980 before becoming *Scream!* assistant editor in 1984, Simon Furman believes that *2000 AD* was a significant factor in the early days of the fledgling title, although it quickly escaped from under The Mighty One’s formidable shadow.

“From the creators to the format →

“Despite what some thought, the end product was a good one”



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SCREAM!

TALES FROM THE GRAVE

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awaits...but whose body
was in that coffin?



New Zealand 65c, Malaysia \$1.45, Transylvania 2 Marks.

and Ghastly McNasty, *2000 AD* was the template from which *Scream!* sprung," he says. "But largely down to Ian, it very quickly gained its own unique identity and style that started to owe less and less to *2000 AD*, *Eagle* and the rest. For the most part, *Scream!* had a straightforward story and character-led roster of stories – like *The Thirteenth Floor* and *Monster* – that differed from *2000 AD*'s more scathing and satirical sci-fi content. Even with the supernatural elements, the strips in *Scream!* were grounded and gripping dramas first and foremost, and readers responded well to that immersive, intelligent kind of storytelling."



Boasting an opening four-pager by Alan Moore and Heinzl who were then replaced by John Wagner and Alan Grant – writing as "Rick Clark" – and Spanish artist Jesus Redondo, *Monster* is a prime example of that more sensitive approach. "Alan Moore wrote both the first episode of *Monster* and also a treatment of how the story might develop but other work commitments meant that he wasn't available to contribute anything more to the title," says Rimmer, referring to the Northampton author's breakthrough stint on *Swamp Thing*, which began in 1983. "I was never shown Alan's story treatment, but was told it took the story into areas management wanted to avoid. Naturally, I've always wondered what ideas Alan had in mind, but by the time I came on board, Alan Grant and John Wagner had already been selected to take the story forward."

Focusing on the surprisingly tender relationship between 12-year-old Kenneth Corman and his deformed, preternaturally strong Uncle Terry, who had been secretly locked in an attic for many years, *Monster* is believed to have been partly based upon the so-called Monster of Glamis. The first child of the Queen Mother's great-grandparents, the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, he was rumoured to have been hidden away from early 19th century society because of his apparent deformities.

"The story of the Monster of Glamis has lots of staple elements for a classic gothic tale, so perhaps Alan and John had fragments of that legend in mind when they took over writing *Monster*," says Rimmer, who also compares it to the original 1931 film of *Frankenstein*. "There's a scene where that monster encounters a little girl beside a lake and they play a game of throwing flowers in the water to watch them float.

GHASTLY BEYOND BELIEF

Dusting off treasures from the *Scream!* vault

→ Featuring interviews with various writers, artists and other key individuals, Hibernia Press will soon release *It's Ghastly*, which Simon Furman describes as "a lovingly crafted compendium of rare or unpublished bits from *Scream!*"

Along with unused scripts and re-creations of the covers of the unpublished 16th, 17th and 18th issues, it will include a previously unpublished, almost complete four-parter *Fellowship Of Fear* by Furman and Gonzalez. "I've filled in the blanks and finished off the story, based on my bad memory and what was there in the artwork," says Furman. "It was really weird seeing scripts of mine from 30 years ago. I did a lot of wincing but once I got over that, I re-dialogued the whole thing and it came together well."



Uncle Terry gets an unfortunately predictable reaction.

When they run out of flowers, the misguided creature throws her into the water to see if she will float, but of course she drowns. Briefly though, the frail, small child and the huge lumbering monster were in tune and co-operating, and it was a similar relationship between a youngster and his powerful, disfigured relative that we sought to expand upon and explore in *Monster*."

While joking that he "wouldn't put anything past the royal family", Alan Grant admits that his only enduring memory of scripting *Monster* is "laughter, although I'm not sure whether Alan meant it to be a humour story."

He also speaks fondly of his and Wagner's other main contribution to *Scream!*, *The Thirteenth Floor*, which focused on crazed super-computer Max, who would wreak terrible vengeance upon any unsuspecting wrongdoers who ventured into the elevator of his tower block. "I remember enjoying it immensely as we wrote it," he says. "Max was a really great character, and boy did he make those evil people pay!"

"It was a fun story to write, and like a lot of the stories Alan and I did, it fed off itself, with one thing leading to another until the characters – in this case, Max – took over, dictating to a large extent where the story would go next," continues Wagner, who suggests that Max is similar in mindset to Doomlord, the genocidal alien, whose exploits he and Grant chronicled in *Eagle*. "Doomlord opined that the fate of the



THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR

HI, YOUR PAL MAX HERE. THE BUILDING COMPUTER OVER AT MAXWELL TOWER. I WON'T STOP TO CHAT-I'VE GOT SOMEONE UP ON MY THIRTEENTH FLOOR. AND I'M REALLY PUTTING MIA THROUGH IT. WHY DON'T YOU COME UP AND TAKE A LOOK?

SCRIPT: IAN HOLLAND
ART: ORTIZ
LETTERING: M. PETERS

++ HIS NAME WAS BULLOCK. A CALLOUS HOUSING OFFICER WHO WAS SO NASTY TO THE POOR SUPER FAMILY. ADMIRAL AT SEA. HE WAS HEADING FOR THE SAFETY OF AN ISLAND I'D CREATED ++

++ HE THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO GET THERE UNSCATHED. FOOLISH MAN! ++

OHAI GOSH! SHARKS!

TH- THEY'RE ALL AROUND ME. CLOSING IN!

We're leaving you on a cliffhanger here!

Count to the then-present day, as he flees his Eastern European homeland and is mistaken by British Intelligence for a defector upon his arrival in the UK. “We wanted all the stories to have a contemporary setting, something that readers could relate to,” says Furman, who was also given the more onerous task of wrapping up the less well-received

"Terror Of The Cats was right there in the original dummy, but suddenly after only two instalments, IPC got cold feet, and Ian was told to wrap it up ASAP, and in the process move it as far into the realm of the fantastical as possible," recalls Furman. "Maybe they feared kids culling their household moggies wholesale because 'it looked at me in a funny way!' Ian and I discussed how best to move the story to a conclusion, although the big Brain of the Cats was my idea, as it was a homage to those 1950s sci-fi films I'd loved watching as a kid."

Unfortunately, *Terror Of The Cats'* abrupt curtailing foreshadowed *Scream's* equally rapid demise. Beset by interference from higher-ups, who constantly demanded changes in content, often resulting in delays, it eventually became a sacrificial lamb in a bitter conflict between IPC and the National Union of Journalists. "Despite

the starburst on the cover of *Scream!* #1 claiming that it was "Not For The Nervous!" the senior managers at IPC's youth department seemed terrified that it would cause them problems," says Rimmer, who maintains that *Scream!* was not cancelled because of poor sales figures. "It was my feeling at the time, and it remains so, that the IPC board, having sanctioned the title, actually lost its nerve once they saw it in print and decided to axe it to avoid potential allegations of publishing a so-called comic-nasty, hiding behind the smokescreen of an industrial dispute to do it."

Indeed, both *Monster* and *The Thirteenth Floor* went on to enjoy long runs in *Eagle* after its union with *Scream!* “It was a shame that *Scream!* was cut so short, but the writing was on the wall long before the plug was pulled,” reflects Furman. “Anyway, it’s all water under the bridge now and *Scream!* – in a kind of undying way – won’t stay buried, so maybe we got the last laugh in the end. Cue a Vincent Price-style creepy cackle!” 🍌

Monster is published by Rebellion in July. It's Ghastly is out soon from Hibernia Press.

individual was irrelevant, as the survival of the species was the important thing, and Max in the same way would happily sacrifice anyone for the good of his tenants.”



Now a successful comics scribe best known for his work on *Transformers*, Simon Furman cut his teeth on *Scream!*, penning *Beware The Werewolf* for artist Steve Dillon, and filling in for Gerry Finley Day on *The Dracula File* on a couple of occasions. “Most of my scripts for *Scream!* was me pitching in to avoid some kind of deadline crunch,” he says. “With *The Dracula File*, I was largely padding out Gerry’s work, and buying him some breathing space. Each of my interjections were designed to feed in and out of what he was doing, and simultaneously not derail his longer-term plans. But I enjoyed them, and especially the latter three-parter from *Scream!* #13-15, which allowed me to channel my affection for Hammer horror.”

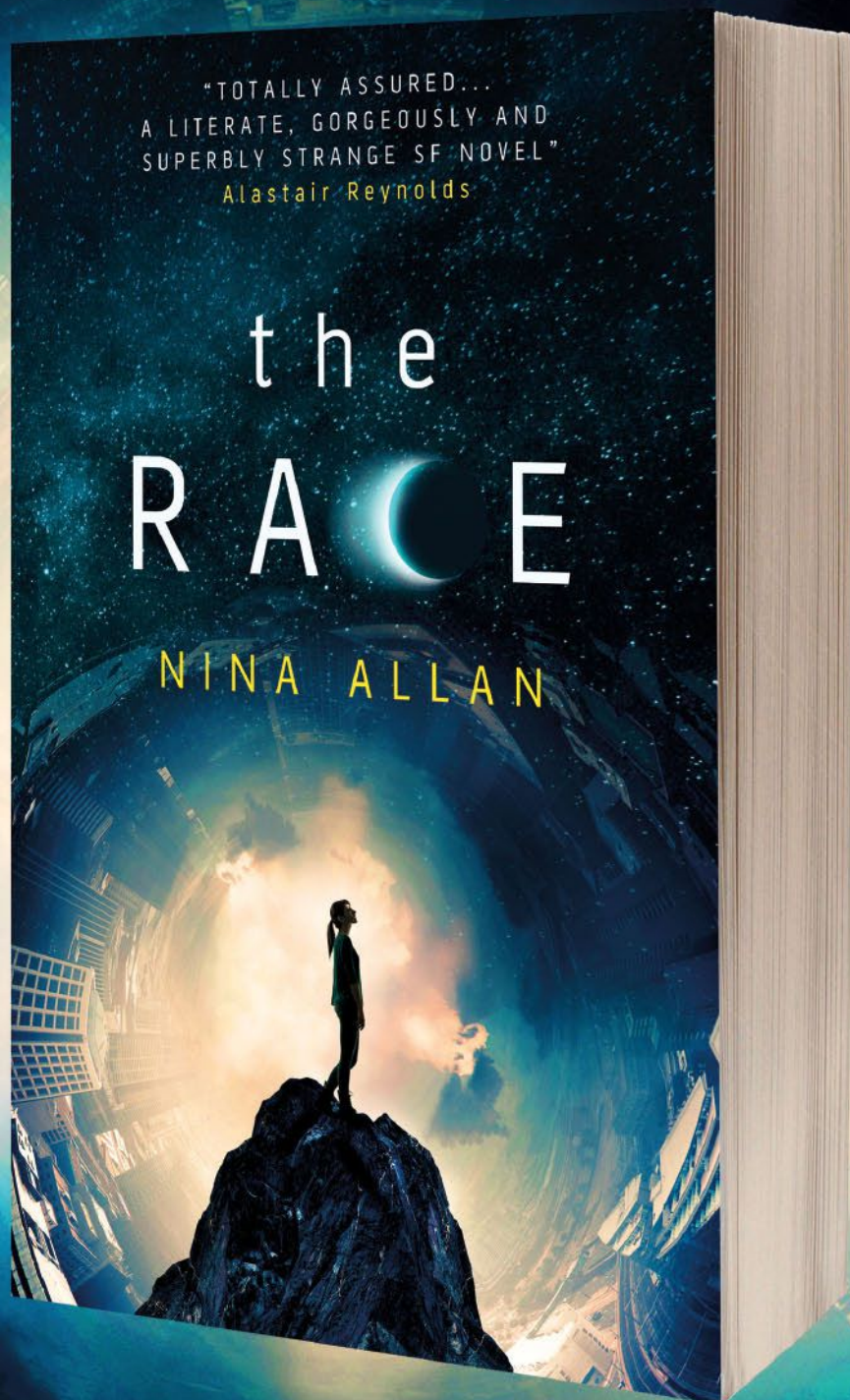
Illustrated by Eric Bradbury and Geoff Senior, *The Dracula File* updated the familiar tale of the bloodsucking

[illegible]

And a little bit of Hammer horror for seasoning

Kids: be good to cats.
They're actually really nice

"EVERY NOW AND THEN, A DEBUT NOVEL
KNOCKS YOU BLIND... *THE RACE* WILL HAVE
YOUR COMPASS SPINNING"
STRANGE HORIZONS



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edited by Ian Berriman

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→ The aliens are back! Where there's no Will, is there still a way?



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→ Now with a whole 23 minutes of extra footage. But still pants.



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DARK MATTER

→ The Wayward Pines author's latest plays with parallel worlds.

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ SUPERB ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ AVERAGE ★★★★★ POOR ★★★★★ TERRIBLE

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Earth 2 Alien scum 0



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 120 minutes

▶ Director **Roland Emmerich**

▶ Cast **Jeff Goldblum, Maika Monroe, Liam Hemsworth, Bill Pullman**

♣ In 2008 **Roland Emmerich** opened his luxury London home to the world's media. His taste in interior decor was remarkable: a painting of Jesus in a Wham! T-shirt; a diorama of the doomed Kennedy motorcade; a life-size waxwork of Pope John Paul II, reading his own obituaries.

Did we really have Emmerich wrong all these years? Was the man behind such earnest catastrophe porn as *2012* and *The Day After Tomorrow* really an exponent of high-end kitsch, more art world prankster Jeff Koons than disaster movie merchant Irwin Allen? Was it too late to wrap quote marks around his schlock-studded oeuvre? Too late to regard it all with a knowing smirk?

If that's Emmerich's true artistic

impulse then it's buried in this tardy, disappointing sequel. While *Independence Day* revelled in rah-rah patriotism and thunderous bubblegum thrills – it would have played like gangbusters released in the age of Trump – *Resurgence* dials down the jingoism and goes easier on the cheese. It also ditched the disaster flick blueprint that made the original such a canny crowdpleaser. If *Independence Day* wanted to be *The Towering Inferno* mated with *Star Wars*, its encore has no higher ambition than strapping itself into a fighter jet and zapping alien ass.

Gone is the sense of an ordinary world, ordinary people, waking up to something ominous and unknowable. No giant shadows fall on everyday cities. Twenty years on we have monorails and a moonbase and all kinds of tech-candy, salvaged from alien science (there's something strangely touching about this shiny sci-fi utopia – it looks wonderful, so uncynical).



"But I thought Chris Hemsworth's brother was Loki!"



Everyone was shocked by the referendum result.

Now our heroes are the frontline pilots defending planet Earth. Sadly they're a stiff bunch of ciphers. You feel for Maika Monroe and Jessie Usher, tossed these slivers of character by an unforgiving screenplay, trying so hard to three-dimensionalise these blanks. The movie wants Liam Hemsworth to be the dazzling *Top Gun* scoundrel, filling the almighty void left by Will Smith, but he's sold to us as a charmless jock.

It's left to the old guard to inject some desperately needed life. Brent Spiner has contagious, outsized fun as resurrected hippy

“Gone is the sense of an ordinary world”

boffin Brackish Okun. Bill Pullman, once a weaponised Bill Clinton, is now a bearded loon, ravaged by visions. A seemingly ageless Judd Hirsch brings genuine warmth and humanity. And then there's Jeff Goldblum, moving through it all like mercury,



nervy and ironic, observing his own movie as if it's some particularly fascinating thought experiment. God, he's great.

Emmerich delivers on the visuals, naturally. Flashlights explore an eerie, skull-filled African night. A mothership squats over a shanty town, *District 9*-style. The palette seems darker, colder. Elsewhere the sky steals cars and boats and people. London succumbs to an apocalyptic firestorm ("They like to get the landmarks," declares Goldblum, knowingly, as Tower Bridge falls, but there's less of this kind of thing

than you might imagine – maybe the aliens have lost their hunger, or perhaps Emmerich has). The new mothership, preposterously, kind of gloriously, is over 3,000 miles in diameter. Trailer-friendly soundbites remind us it's "bigger than the last one!"

Ultimately it's all so much empty shock and awe. Bad narrative choices begin to bleed through the cracks in the spectacle. Hirsch suddenly finds himself in charge of a busful of kids, as if the film has just remembered it needs to be about real people too. A throwaway line

about African rebels fighting a bitter ground war with the last wave of invaders leaves you pining for that movie instead.

Resurgence feels like a franchise extension that's 15 years too late. The last words we hear are shameless sequel-bait but it's hard to imagine anyone caring now. Stirring music plays but this bland, oddly ephemeral film never quite earns its victory. Sometimes bad taste is better than no aftertaste at all. **Nick Setchfield**

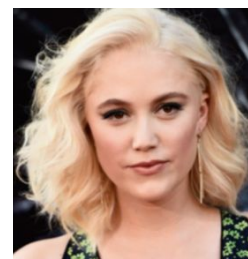
i Dr Okun is named in tribute to Jeffrey A Okun, digital effects supervisor on Emmerich's 1994 hit *Stargate*.



MIND
PROBE

MAIKA MONROE

Patricia Whitmore
in *Independence Day*
Day: Resurgence



Was the original *Independence Day* part of your childhood?

→ I was two when it came out but I was probably about 10 or 11 when I saw it for the first time. My dad was a huge fan of the film, so he showed it to me. I think we rented it on VHS! The good old days! It's a super-special film.

What's Roland Emmerich like as a director?

→ He's very specific and I like that in a director. He's very focused on all the green screen and the extras and everything that's going on in the background but he cares most about the performances, because without that you really have nothing. So we'd really take our time – sometimes we'd be doing 15 takes on a scene.

You had SWAT team training when you made *The 5th Wave*. Was that something that you brought to this film?

→ Oh yeah, that helped a lot – just holding a gun and knowing how to hold a gun is so specific, so very, very helpful – just the technique, how you move.

Can you take a gun apart and put it back together?

→ I might need a little help but I think I could, yeah!
Nick Setchfield

CINEMA



Countryfile got interesting.

THE BFG

As good as Roald

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 22 JULY**

PG | 117 minutes

▶ Director Steven Spielberg

▶ Cast Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Penelope Wilton, Jemaine Clement

🔗 **The BFG reunites Steven Spielberg** with *ET* writer Melissa Mathison after 34 years. It was worth the wait – there's boundless wonder to be found in this glorumptious Roald Dahl adap.

After orphan Sophie (Ruby Barnhill) catches the eye of a figure as tall as a house outside her window one night, she's whisked away to Giant Country. Fortunately for Sophie, this giant (a mo-capped Mark Rylance) is friendly. The BFG can't let Sophie return home for risk of revealing his kind, but it's equally dangerous for Sophie to stay in Giant Country, where nine bloodthirsty man-eaters inch closer to sniffing her out. All the while the BFG continues his work – catching and distributing dreams.

Adapted with care and warmth by the late Mathison, the script is a delight. It tones down the darkness of Dahl's prose, but it's entirely faithful to the story.

For well over an hour it's almost entirely a two-hander, with the relationship between the BFG and Sophie hitting all the right notes. The film is in no rush, with languorous scenes where the two converse about Phizzwizards or Froboscottle. But it's when the BFG makes it to Buckingham Palace that it soars, with a succession of hilarious sight gags as the BFG scoffs a gargantuan breakfast with the Queen.

The BFG is stunning to look at too, with gorgeous Victoriana production design in the England-set sequences, while abandoned Ferris wheels and colossal stone archways punctuate Giant Country's rolling fields.

The only real disappointment is the other nine giants: not as grotesque as they are in the book, they're oafish buffoons. The film also doesn't strive for the thematic complexity of something like *ET*. But compared to the last big-screen Dahl – Tim Burton's *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* – this is in an entirely different league. **Jordan Farley**

i The 1989 animated version of *The BFG* (with David Jason) has just been reissued on Blu-ray. It comes with "free giant ears"!



Blackpool's really gone downhill.

THE PURGE: ELECTION YEAR

Ballot Time

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 105 minutes (TBC)

▶ Director James DeMonaco

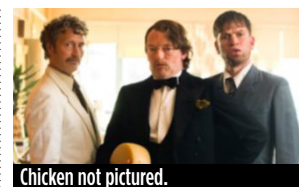
▶ Cast Elizabeth Mitchell, Frank Grillo, Edwin Hodge

🔗 **2014's *The Purge: Anarchy*** expanded on the original home invasion thriller, and added political comment that was more in your face than some of the violence. Now here comes *Election Year*, which goes full Trump, milking the rich vs poor arguments for all it can.

Frank Grillo's back as police sergeant Leo Barnes, here protecting a crusading politician (Elizabeth Mitchell) running for president so she can take down the New Founding Fathers of America and end the annual ritual of lawless mayhem for good.

Much like the previous outing, the messaging is less than subtle, though the characters spouting it are at least a touch more interesting. Writer/director James DeMonaco is still a little bit too in love with the carnage, but he stages a few effective setpieces as Grillo's tough nut shepherds Mitchell through the dangerous streets with a few willing anti-Purge comrades. The big finale is annoyingly close to *Anarchy* (especially its setting), and the government villains are now so cartoonish as to seem drawn from Nigel Farage's wet dreams, but the concept still has some entertainment value left. **James White**

i DeMonaco originally intended to make a prequel to the first *Purge*, until Grillo agreed to return as Sergeant Barnes.



Chicken not pictured.

MEN & CHICKEN

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 102 minutes

🔗 **In this sinister yet hilarious film**, two brothers learn they're not their late father's biological progeny. Venturing to a remote island, long-buried truths and a twisted family tree give rise to an unusual contemplation of evolution and existence.

Located in a befuddling no-man's-land between *The League Of Gentlemen* and *Lord Of The Flies*, this oblique Danish language feature achieves a surprising emotional resonance. Its grotesque oddity will delight and disturb in equal measure.

Matt Anderson

ALSO+OUT



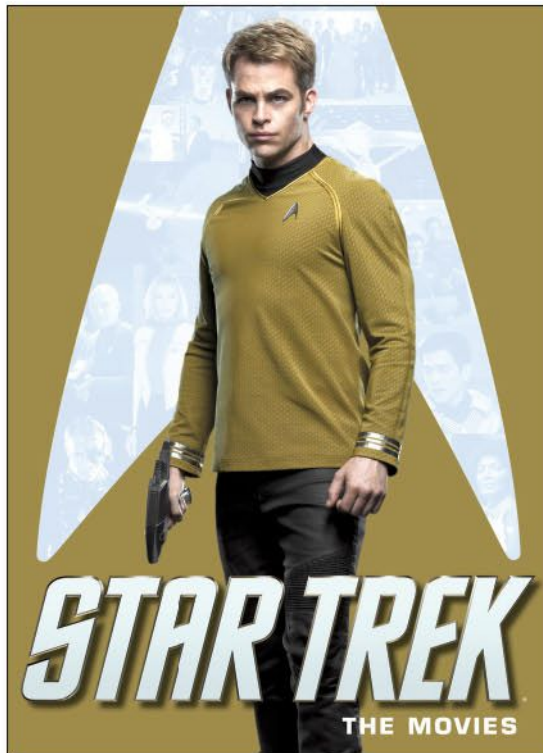
Quite a few films wriggled through our net this month. **GHOSTBUSTERS** is out, but wasn't screened before our deadline. **STAR TREK BEYOND** warps into cinemas on 22 July. DC animated movie **BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE** is getting a theatrical outing, but *only* in Vue cinemas on 25 July – we'll review the DVD release (due 8 August) next issue. Jet Li stars in action fantasy **LEAGUE OF GODS** (29 July). Friday 5 August presents a choice between **SUICIDE SQUAD** or Kevin Spacey trapped in a cat in **NINE LIVES**. Tough call. Finally, 12 August brings Disney remake **PETE'S DRAGON**. Phew.

TITAN PRESENTS

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as told by the cast
and crew!

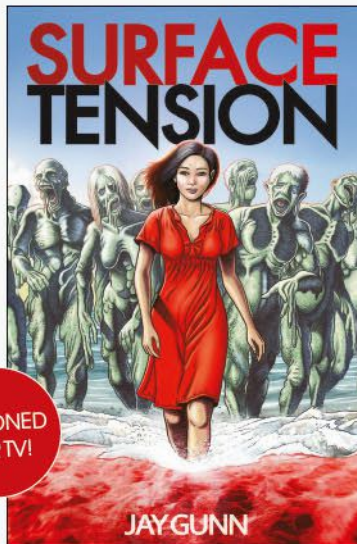


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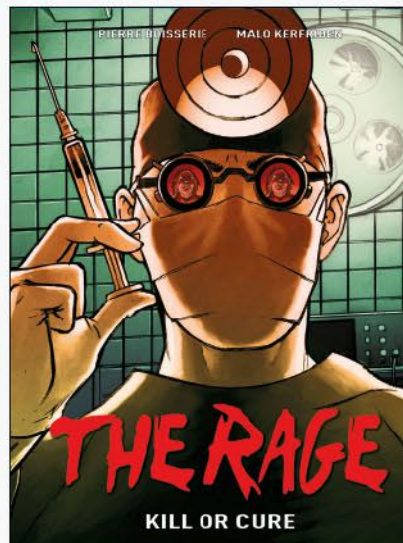


OPTIONED
FORTV!

SURFACE TENSION
JAY GUNN

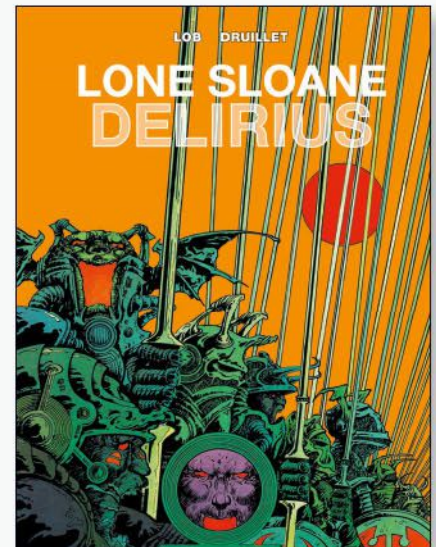
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BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

Bat-tered and bruised

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 1 AUGUST (Blu-ray/DVD)/OUT NOW! (download)**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/

DVD/download

▶ Director Zack Snyder

▶ Cast Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Diane Lane

● Bruce Wayne. Clark Kent.

Diana Prince. Properly together on the big screen in live-action for the first time ever. Surely you can't mess that up? And yet Zack Snyder, so consumed with the grim and serious tone he set in *Man Of Steel*, gives it a royal try, sucking the fun out of a landmark cinematic event.

But let's find the positives, shall we? Ben Affleck makes for a decent, haunted Bruce, enlivened by his spiky interplay with Jeremy Irons's Alfred and Gal Gadot's Wonder

Woman. Gadot's warrior is a ray of light, grinning into battle with the inevitable CG baddie, while the final confrontation – when it actually gives the actors something to do rather than their stuntmen – has a few flashes of the sort of movie we might one day get. That's about it for the plus column.

Elsewhere, Snyder makes everything dark and foreboding, dragging Henry Cavill further away from the charm he has shown elsewhere, with writers David Goyer and Chris Terrio dreaming up a truly stupid reason for the two main heroes to fight and an even more ludicrous explanation for their change of heart. We all know the Justice League is in their future, and the ride to that point could have been exhilarating, but this feels more like a chore than entertainment.



Nope, nothing weird or creepy about this at all, nosiree.



By this point you're really taking brooding to an epic new level.

Amy Adams is stranded in a confusing, useless subplot and while Jesse Eisenberg does his best to inject fresh life into Lex Luthor, he's also mired in twists and turns that do little to help the film's cause. (The less said about Granny's Peach Tea, the better.)

Snyder had a hefty effects budget to play with, so we certainly get some spectacle, but there's little depth beneath it. With the director clearly figuring that Batman wasn't gloomy and driven enough, now he's extra violent, while Superman rarely bothers to seem more than

“Remains a badly structured mess”

annoyed that he has to save people from time to time. The final “twist”, meanwhile, is rendered meaningless given what we know about the character and their future with everyone else. Sure, it's some sort of spur for the formation of the Justice League itself, but it's



such a waste of what could have been interesting down the line.

Batman V Superman has its defenders, but unfortunately the version that was delivered to cinemas remains a badly structured mess. Plot threads are left dangling for the future with all the subtlety of a streaker at a football match, and there's a real feeling that a solid cast of actors (including Laurence Fishburne, Holly Hunter, Scoot McNairy and Diane Lane) are wasted, with little to do other than pushing the plot forward.

And if you are going to use a movie to introduce the other

members of the Justice League in tiny cameos (their names and logos picked, confusingly, by Lex), at least do them the honour of finding some way of doing it that doesn't make non-comics fans scratch their heads. *Batman V Superman* had all the ingredients to be a comic book movie classic. It's just a shame that along the way, the recipe got muddled and the result was such a mishandled confection.

➔ **Extras** The Blu-ray formats feature both the theatrical cut and a longer Ultimate Edition cut featuring 23 minutes of additional footage, which helps explain some

confusing logic leaps (such as all the guff about the "magic bullet" that serves as a journalistic quest for Lois) but doesn't necessarily improve things. You also get 11 featurettes on such aspects as the design of the new Batmobile, the Batcave, and the main characters. Some of these are fairly substantial, with the total running time clocking in at 138 minutes. NB: buy the DVD and you just get the theatrical cut, plus one five-minute featurette. **James White**

i Affleck borrowed his suit to play Batman at his son's fourth birthday party. Now that's the Batman movie we need.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Best bits from the Ultimate Edition



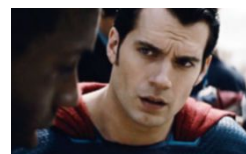
MORE JIMMY

Yes, that really is Jimmie Olsen exposed as a CIA operative. In this cut he reveals more about the US government's involvement before he bows out.



MEET JENET KLYBURN

After all the rumours, Jena Malone's cut character turns out to be a STAR Labs forensic scientist from the comics, *not* Batgirl.



AFTER THE BOOM

If you were hoping for more humanising of Superman, his work helping victims at the Capitol Building explosion makes it clear he doesn't just fly off.



LEX KNOWS

Lex makes it clear that he knows who Bruce really is through a series of puns about as subtle as a Brighton Pier comedian. "How it all caves in?" Please.



DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- 🍷 Kara mentions that Superman is her cousin. (Yeah, we know.)
- 🍷 Hank Henshaw flashes his glowing red eyes.
- 🍷 Kara brings Cat Grant a coffee.
- 🍷 James Olsen shows off his novelty, Superman-summoning watch.
- 🍷 Young Kara is seen on Krypton.
- 🍷 Hank loses his job as head of the DEO. (Swig again when he gets it back.)
- 🍷 There's a cameo from someone with previous Super form (eg Dean Cain, Helen Slater).

Somewhere someone's missing a bicycle chain.

SUPERGIRL Season One

Kara Chameleon

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 25 JULY**

2015-2016 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creators Greg Berlanti, Ali Adler,

Andrew Kreisberg

▶ Cast Melissa Benoist, Calista

Flockhart, Mehcad Brooks, Chyler Leigh

❖ **Superman may have had a** tough time of it on the big screen this year, but life hasn't been all bad for citizens of Krypton. *Supergirl*, the latest DC Comics spin-off from the team behind *Arrow* and *The Flash*, shares much more DNA with the Christopher Reeve movies than the mopeathon that was *Batman V Superman* – it's a fun, upbeat and incredibly likeable action drama that doesn't have a miserable bone in its superpowered body.

That's despite the fact that things don't look too promising after the first few episodes, which feel like a throwback to the 20th century. As millennial Kara Danvers struggles to juggle career, friendship, romance and saving the world in an *ever so* adorable way, it's as if some committee decided that in order to make a show about a female hero appeal to a female audience, you have to make "Ally McBeal in a cape". But pretty quickly everything clicks into place as the writers decide to concentrate instead on making a decent superhero show that totally embraces the comic book lore that inspired it. The result is the sort of uplifting, mass-appeal entertainment that Marvel has made its own on the big screen.

As well as being ambitious on the action front, it's impressively DC-literate. Not only is the Martian Manhunter a series regular, infamous Kryptonian prison Fort Rozz and its inmates have crashed near National City, and obscure comic book villains like Livewire and Silver Banshee often show up to wreak havoc.

But the main reason *Supergirl* works is the casting. The male characters are mostly forgettable – though Mehcad Brooks's jockish James (not Jimmy!) Olsen is a refreshing break from the norm – but its two female leads are brilliant. Calista Flockhart's media mogul Cat Grant is a wonderful creation, whose snarky gift for a hilarious putdown masks a surprisingly warm interior. And in

the title role, Melissa Benoist is a revelation as both Supergirl and alter-ego Kara, wholeheartedly embracing a wide-eyed character who has no front and is quite simply a nice person – you can't help but fall in love with her.

Supergirl does get formulaic on occasion, and there's a slight overreliance on (not very) dark moments of the soul backed by terrible American soft rock. But this remains another triumph for DC's impressive TV operation – with the show moving from US network CBS to join *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *Legends Of Tomorrow* on the CW for its second season, expect it to run with that comic book vibe even more.

➤ **Extras** Featurettes on Martian Manhunter J'onn J'onzz and the history of Krypton (19 minutes); the 2015 San Diego Comic-Con panel (15 minutes); a gag reel; 23 minutes of deleted scenes.

Richard Edwards

i There's only glimpses of Superman here, but he'll be a fully-fledged character next year, played by *Teen Wolf's* Tyler Hoechlin.



While the hotel was a little overcrowded, the head cleaner was very nice.

HARDCORE HENRY

First-person, second-rate?

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED 1 AUGUST
 2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD
 Director Ilya Naishuller
 Cast Sharlto Copley, Tim Roth, Haley Bennett, Andrei Dementiev

❖ **PS4 knackered? Then stick** *Hardcore Henry* in your player. It's essentially a first-person shooter, and a very violent one to boot. The drawback for gamers is that they can't actually influence events.

Those concern a cybernetic soldier who's brought back from the dead with no vocal cords or memories. Given instructions by a variety of characters, all played by Sharlto Copley, he embarks on a mission to thwart a Magneto-like villain, Akan (Danila Kozlovsky).

If you like violence, you'll love it. Flamethrowers, machine-guns, pliers... you name it, they're all used to inflict pain on human

beings. The stunt work is remarkable and the technical prowess awe-inspiring. But although the film is not without wit, albeit of the treacle-black type, it gets wearying – there's only so much relentless brutality you can take, especially when it's sometimes not clear who's doing what to who. Henry also can't talk, and that may have been an error, because it could have at least allowed for more characterisation and perhaps some quips.

But in the end that's not what *Hardcore Henry* is about; it's a movie for people who want their movies to look like videogames.

❖ **Extras** Commentary by the director and Copley; no sign of the deleted scenes and "fan chat" from the US release. **Russell Lewin**

i At one point a poster for *Lady In The Lake*, a 1947 film shot entirely from the protagonist's point of view, is seen on a wall.

TERRAHAWKS Series One

Zeroid tolerance

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED 25 JULY
 1983 | U | Blu-ray/DVD
 Creators Gerry Anderson, Christopher Burr
 Cast Denise Bryer, Windsor Davies, Jeremy Hitchen, Anne Ridler

BLU-RAY DEBUT **"Terrahawks! Stay** on this channel! This is an emergency!" With this pulse-quicken call to arms Gerry Anderson entered the '80s, abandoning his live-action dreams to return to the puppets that made his legend. He may have dressed it up with box-fresh buzz-words like Hudsoncolor and Supermacromation, and made his new heroes out of flexible latex, not wood, but make no mistake: this is a bid to reignite old glories.

Terrahawks recycles classic Anderson tropes for post-*Star Wars* kids, delivering yet another

worldwide defence force with a hidden base and a sleek fleet of vehicles, defending Earth against an alien menace. But there's a new, contagious glibness: the villains, led by cackling space-hag Zelda, are killingly funny, far from the chilling threat of the Mysterons or *UFO*'s nameless invaders. There are droids, too, the ballbearing-like Zeroids, led by Windsor Davies's Sergeant Major Zero, majestically Welsh for all that he's circuits and wires.

You feel the absence of Anderson's traditional collaborators. The miniature work has none of the grace or pure cool of Derek Meddings, while the characters miss Sylvia Anderson's knack for bestowing TV immortality. But if you can shake the fact that hero Dr Tiger Ninestein sounds uncannily like Loyd Grossman, there's enough of



"I'm suing Oil of Olay!"

an echo of FABness here to keep you entertained.

❖ **Extras** "Geronimo!", a special effects featurette with original FX guys Steve Begg and Terry Adlam; "The Composer's Perspective" with Richard Harvey; Big Finish audio episode "The Price Is Right"; a sampler of recent animated webseries "Zeroids Vs Cubes"; the music video for Glass Onion's

"Don't Be Afraid", starring Sergeant Zero; effects trims; PDFs of the *Terrahawks* annual and a script; image gallery; plus, your chance to watch the VHS version of "Expect The Unexpected" for that ultimate '80s nostalgia high!

Nick Setchfield

i Voice actor Jeremy Hitchen based Tiger Ninestein on Jack Nicholson. He got the job after Anderson heard him on the radio.

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

Let's do the twist

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 25 JULY**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director **Dan Trachtenberg**

▶ Cast **Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Goodman, John Gallagher Jr**

❖ **Let's get one thing clear** straight away: this ain't a *Cloverfield* sequel. JJ Abrams may claim that the two films share DNA, but it's probably about as much as humans share with lobsters... Let's not carp, though, because that marketing sleight of hand ensured a sizeable audience for a film which thoroughly deserves it.

Mary Elizabeth Winstead plays Michelle, who, after her car crashes, wakes up in an underground bunker. Its owner Howard (John Goodman) tells her there's been a chemical or nuclear

attack, so they could be stuck down there for years. Is he lying?

It's a deliciously *Twilight Zone*-ish premise, but one which threatens a film that's both claustrophobic and a one-trick pony. Rest easy. The production design ensures that Howard's sprawling, homely bunker never drives you stir crazy. And the central question is answered surprisingly early on – about 45 minutes in. After that, the script delivers another two twists, both satisfying, and both carefully seeded so that you don't feel you've been cheaply Shyamalaned. The unfolding story is perfectly paced and utterly compelling.

That's largely down to the performances. Though not quite a two-hander – *The Newsroom*'s John Gallagher Jr rounds out the cast as joker-in-the-pack Emmett – the

film's success does rest squarely on the shoulders of Goodman and Winstead, and they prove more than up to the task. Goodman is a triumph: switching from menace to charm in a split second, he's relatable at moments and utterly terrifying in others. Winstead is equally impressive as a character whose gutsy determination and seemingly infinite resourcefulness are hugely appealing. JJ has neatly summed up the film as “the origin story of a heroine”, and it'd be a shame if we don't get to see the next act of her exploits.

❖ **Extras** Seven featurettes (on the Blu-ray, that is – the DVD only gets three) and a commentary by director Dan Trachtenberg and Abrams. The featurettes (totalling 35 minutes) are pretty standard, covering subjects such as the

“Perfectly paced and utterly compelling”

bunker design, the effects and the score; be sure to check out one that shows how they filmed the car crash, using a vehicle mounted on a rig to rotate it like “a big rotisserie”. The commentary, however, is fascinating, turning this from a movie you'll want to watch twice to one you should give a third viewing. Trachtenberg is one of those directors for whom watching yak tracks was film school, and so is fully engaged, discussing creative choices; pointing out instances of fake beard, continuity errors and logic gaps; and flagging reshoots and other tweaks. Only annoying thing: this mentions cut sequences – including one where Goodman gives a speech about the 1812 siege of Valencia – that are nowhere to be found. Don'tcha hate it when that happens? **Ian Berriman**

i Early on, the voice of Michelle's fiancé is provided by Bradley Cooper. He literally phoned in the performance.



The lemon eating contest was tough.

THE TIME TRAVELERS

You'll like it (not a lot)

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1964 | PG | DVD

▶ Director **Ib Melchior**

▶ Cast **Preston Foster, Philip Carey, Merry Anders, John Hoyt**

❖ **People often talk about the** magic of cinema, but this colourful, undemanding sci-fi adventure is one of the few films that delivers it in spades – and in the most literal terms.

Pulpily Wellsian, it sees four scientists transported to a post-apocalyptic 2071 after their experimental “time-viewer” short-circuits, turning a window on the future into a doorway. There they find the last few humans living underground, besieged by aggressive mutants.

It's a film low on plot and high on exposition, with much of the screen time spent showing us this future world. Fortunately, with its bald, grid-mouthed android servants, outlandish costumes and, er, tanning room for half-naked ladies, it's an endearingly quirky one. Writer/director Ib Melchior's script also ticks off countless SF concepts: photon propulsion, suspended animation, teleportation, generation ships – you name it.

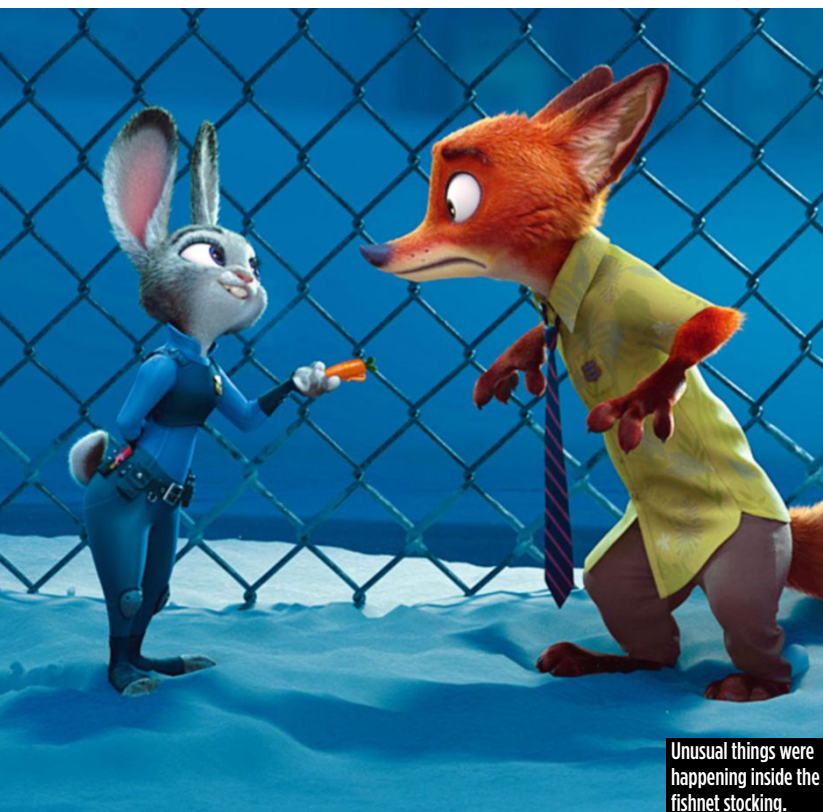
But the chief delight is the substitution of stage magic for special effects. An edit-free sequence in which an android lies down, has its head removed and replaced, then gets up and walks away will have you rewinding in baffled amazement.

❖ **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**

i Because of their height, some of the mutants were played by members of the LA Lakers basketball team.



Cold-caller: persistent.



Unusual things were happening inside the fishnet stocking.

ZOOTROPOLIS

Animal Magic

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 25 JULY**

2016 | PG | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD/
download

▶ Directors Byron Howard, Rich Moore

▶ Cast Ginnifer Goodwin, Jason

Bateman, Idris Elba, Nate Torrence

🔗 **The winning formula of** recent Disney animated movies continues with *Zootropolis*. While it's essentially a buddy comedy about a rabbit cop (Ginnifer Goodwin's Judy Hopps) and a con man fox (Jason Bateman's Nick Wilde), the film has a lot more on its mind.

There are smart subtexts about racism and police behaviour, and how tough it is for people to live together. But everything is delivered with panache and joy, including imaginative designs, clever gags, a story that wends its way through cop drama and noir

to slapstick and back again, and jubilant vocal performances that always serve the film.

Hopps and Wilde are an endearing duo, and their world is consistently impressive with its many layers of detail. How many other animated animal adventures do you know that also include a spot-on riff on *Breaking Bad*?

🔗 **Extras** Significant changes were made quite late in the day: seven not fully-finished deleted scenes (18 minutes, with introductions) shed some light on this, as does a three-minute piece on deleted characters. You also get: a three-part, 20-minute roundtable with production staff; short pieces on research, the story, the score and Easter Eggs (27 minutes); a music video. **James White**

i Alan Tudyk voices Duke Weaselton. His *Frozen* character's name, the Duke of Weselton, was often mispronounced.



Osborne's warnings came true.

REPTILICUS

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1961 | PG | DVD

🔗 **Godzilla Does Copenhagen**, basically. The locations are one novelty of this monster movie, which at times looks like an ad for the Danish Tourist Board. Another's the way its monster is created, regenerating itself from an excavated tail tip.

Sadly it's so-bad-it's-bad inept in almost every respect: the dodgy dubbing, the stilted dialogue, and most of all the monster. A wobbly marionette never convincingly integrated with the live action, it's about as frightening as *The Clangers'* Soup Dragon.

🔗 **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**



"As cocktails go, I've seen better."

DAEMOS RISING

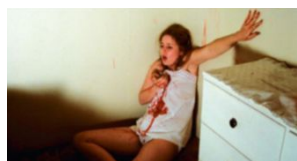
★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2004 | PG | DVD

🔗 **This DTV follow-up to 1971** *Doctor Who* "The Daemons" starts promisingly: Miles Richardson is excellent as a broken UNIT veteran who stole an occult book, and the atmosphere is effectively spooky. Then a "ghost" turns out to be a time traveller carting a ton of who-cares exposition. Plus the climactic face-off between the Brigadier's daughter and some bad CGI is as corny as that of the story which inspired it.

🔗 **Extras** A widescreen version, retrospective, and slide show; six old featurettes. **Calvin Baxter**



Florence sucked at interior decorating.

SATAN'S BLADE

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1982 | 18 | Blu-ray & DVD

🔗 **American indie flick** *Satan's Blade* comes from the lower rent end of the slasher genre – which is saying something.

Some fella is possessed by an evil spirit and killing mountain tourists. Well, eventually. There's so little going on for most of this movie that you almost forget it is a slasher pic. And when the kills arrive, they ain't much to write home about.

🔗 **Extras** Commentary by three critics; a hesitant, lo-fi interview with the director (17 minutes), plus him discussing certain scenes and props (33 minutes); a booklet. **Russell Lewin**



"I'm pretty in colour, honest."

THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1955 | PG | DVD

🔗 **Google the poster for this** movie. Done it? Well the film is *nothing* like it whatsoever.

There's no actual beast, but an alien intelligence that makes animals attack desert dwellers – which means badly intercut scenes of screaming yokels and birds being thrown around.

Was Hitchcock watching? Probably not. He'd have got very bored. And while this B-movie has imagination it's weakly executed, with too much time spent in a kitchen.

🔗 **Extras** None. **Russell Lewin**



When you see a cat's willy.

APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD

April In Paris

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | PG | DVD

▶ Directors Christian Desmares, Franck Ekinci

▶ Cast Marion Cotillard, Philippe Katerine, Jean Rochefort

☉ It seems Brian Talbot's *Grandville* doesn't have a monopoly on steampunk versions of Paris filled with talking animals. But in this effervescently imaginative French animation – based on a graphic novel – the steampunk trappings are not merely aesthetic. The wrong turn history takes, which leaves the world bereft of subsequent scientific breakthroughs, is an important plot point.

In 1941, the sobby French capital is a sprawling steampunk metropolis, with France on the verge of war with Canada. The orphaned great granddaughter of the scientist who inadvertently helped cause this world continues his work into an invincibility serum, with the help of her talking cat...

While the character designs and animation are slightly crude, the backdrops and the intricately detailed world created here are breathtaking. Better still, there's a rattlingly good adventure at its core. Don't be put off by the subtitles, as this isn't just for world cinema connoisseurs – it's a good old-fashioned ripping yarn.

☉ **Extras** None. **Dave Golder**

Jean Rochefort (Pops) played the lead role in Terry Gilliam's abandoned *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*.



Frank's first dogging session wasn't what he expected.

MASTERS OF VENUS

Spunky '60s space serial

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1962 | PG | DVD

▶ Director Ernest Morris

▶ Cast Norman Wooland, Mandy Harper, Robin Stewart, Robin Hunter

☉ **Bless the BFI! Here's another** British sci-fi obscurity resurrected, and while it's not spellbinding, it's as welcome as toast with jam on a cold winter's night.

A black and white Children's Film Foundation serial told in eight parts of 15 minutes each, it bears interesting comparison with the more slam-bang American serials that had their heyday two decades before.

It's certainly a good deal milder: in a story light on real threat, a pair of children accidentally end up on a rocketship to... guess where. There they uncover a plot to poison everyone back on Earth,

“Like toast with jam on a cold winter's night”

and run to and fro chased by six-fingered Venusians wearing a variety of fetching headgear (and what on occasion appear to be see-through rain macs).

This is essentially the Famous Five in space – with an anti-prejudice message in there too. Episode titles such as “Kill On Sight”, “Attack!” and “The Killer Virus” promise rather more excitement than is delivered. But while several episodes are a bland runaround, the final one is genuinely suspenseful, conjuring up an unusual situation that can't be resolved in obvious fashion.

Also separating it from those Yankee serials are the good manners and plummy voices of the cast – including the off-screen announcer who at the end of each instalment intones things like, “What are Votan and Kallas planning for Pat?” You can be assured it's not *that* nasty, and you can be assured that this DVD will keep you away from the real, nasty world for a couple of hours.

☉ **Extras** Just a short essay, on the sleeve. **Russell Lewin**

While this new transfer is generally good quality, “tramline scratching” (vertical lines) is almost always present.



“I think we should phone the plumber.”

THE MERMAID

Farical finned fun

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray (HMV Exclusive/download)

▶ Director Stephen Chow

▶ Cast Yun Lin, Chao Deng, Show Luo, Yuqi Zhang

☉ *The Mermaid* is the highest-grossing movie in Chinese history, was directed by Chinese acting legend Stephen Chow (*Shaolin Soccer*) and has a pertinent environmental theme. But you deserve a medal if you get past the first ten minutes, which make you wonder how on earth it made so much money.

And yet... once you do, you might find that your brain has reached a level of sludgy, stoner, sub-*Austin Powers* mirth that makes you enjoy the rest. You might even laugh. There's a chance you might even laugh out loud. Somehow, giggles are there amidst the dross, and they just about save the film.

It centres on a mermaid – Shan (Yun Lin) – who embarks upon a mission to save her people from the sonar devices being used by billionaire Liu (Chao Deng) to clear a dolphin sanctuary for reclamation. Shuffling around on land hoping to kill him, she ends up falling in love – and so does he...

Occasionally gory, always bonkers, this is so bad it's almost a must-see.

☉ **Extras** “The Making Of The Mermaid” (13 minutes) is surprisingly candid and funny. There's also a pointless spoof music video and a tiny behind-the-scenes piece. **Jayne Nelson**

Most of the film was shot in a heated tank, but not all: while filming in the sea Yun Lin was so cold that she cried!

Reviews



MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Son Is Shining

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED 8 AUGUST
 2016 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD
 ▶ Director Jeff Nichols
 ▶ Cast Michael Shannon, Joel
 Edgerton, Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver

⚡ **Though not Jeff Nichols's first** foray into the fantastic – 2011's *Take Shelter* concerned a man suffering apocalyptic visions – *Midnight Special* still seems like a departure for the indie director. A homage to family-friendly adventures of the '70s and '80s – Nichols has namechecked *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* and *Starman*; you could add *Escape To Witch Mountain* to the list – it uses plot elements of those movies, but tonally feels quite distinct.

Michael "Zod" Shannon plays Roy Tomlin, whose son Alton (Jaeden Lieberher) has astonishing, inexplicable abilities. A religious community referred to as the Ranch see the boy as a saviour. For the government he's a subject for study. Cue a chase across country, with Roy willing to do anything to keep Alton out of their hands.

It's a film which delights in withholding information – it takes

quite some time to piece together the slender synopsis above – but piecing together the puzzle has its pleasures. It grabs you whenever it shifts up a couple of gears – such as in a scene involving a messy shootout and equally chaotic car chase – or reveals more about the full extent of Alton's powers. And though it's frustratingly under-explained, the finale has an undeniable sense of wonder.

But emotionally it's something of a damp squib. This is prime Spielberg territory, but you won't need a hanky. The subtext will no doubt resonate with parents, particularly those who've ever felt powerless in the face of a child's illness. But it feels odd that a film like this is so reluctant to utter the word "love". Roy's bond with Alton is robust, but communicated largely through Shannon's intense glaring. Even cynics and Spielberg-phobes might find themselves wishing for a little less restraint, and a spoonful of sentimentality.

⚡ **Extras** Nine short, choppy edited EPK interviews with cast and crew. **Ian Berriman**

i At one point Alton asks what Kryptonite is. Originally he asked about Adamantium; it was changed after Shannon was cast.

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HOME ENTERTAINMENT



Young Tim got a little tense before the prom.

THE BOY

Living Doll

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director William Brent Bell

▶ Cast Lauren Cohan, Rupert Evans, Jim Norton, Diana Hardcastle

❖ **This horror comes across like** an extreme spin on *My Fake Baby*, a 2007 BBC documentary on the phenomenon of “reborns” – ultra-realistic dolls that are sometimes bought by bereaved parents to comfort themselves.

The Walking Dead’s Lauren Cohan plays Greta, an American nanny taken aback to discover that her new ward Brahms is not a real boy but a porcelain doll. Twenty years ago her employers lost their eight-year-old son to a fire; since then, this simulacra’s taken his place in their affections. They promptly leave it alone with Greta, who becomes increasingly

convinced it’s become the vessel for the disturbed boy’s spirit.

A spiritual heir to evil-ventriloquist’s-doll flicks of yore, *The Boy* doesn’t exactly bear close analysis – quite where such an uncanny creation came from is just one of several glaring unanswered questions. But creepy it undeniably is, especially once a weird psychosexual undercurrent swells (it seems Brahms may have a thing for Greta). There are a handful of decent jump scares, and the audacious final act twist, which turns everything on its head, is quite something – if you can ignore the fact that it doesn’t make a scrap of sense.

❖ **Extras** Two brief promotional featurettes (three minutes).

Ian Berriman

i Screenwriter Stacey Minear says the ending was inspired by two weird ’70s horrors: *The Baby* and *Bad Ronald*.

TIMESLIP

Barrier to success

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1970 | U | DVD

▶ Creator Ruth Boswell

▶ Cast Cheryl Burfield, Spencer Banks, Denis Quilley, Iris Russell

❖ **Conceived, in the words of** creator Ruth Boswell, as Associated Television’s more “down to earth” rival to *Doctor Who*, this fondly remembered children’s sci-fi saga arrived just as the Time Lord himself swapped space and time for exile in the Home Counties.

Though the central conceit of two teenagers disappearing through a time portal is pure Narnia fantasy – with the wardrobe replaced by a hole in some MOD fencing – efforts were made to give the show a covering of scientific legitimacy: Cambridge astronomer Fred Hoyle lent his

son Geoffrey as series consultant, while the first two stories were introduced by ITV science correspondent Peter Fairley.

Cheryl Burfield and Spencer Banks are engaging leads, while stage and screen veteran Denis Quilley injects welcome gravitas as chief antagonist Traynor.

Running to 26 episodes (only one of which still exists in colour) across four time-hopping serials, it proves better at recreating 1940 than it does anticipating 1990, where everyone wears silver jumpsuits instead of flares and beanie hats.

Dramatically engaging – if a little over-earnest – it’s a series that resists talking down to its young audience, introducing big ideas like cloning and climate change years ahead of their time. Today’s kids would no doubt balk at the glacial pace of such stagey,



Negotiations continued in the playroom takeover bid.

largely studio-bound fare, but this handsome box set isn’t aimed at them – it’s aimed at cult telly fans of a certain vintage, who’ll find much to treasure in this slip back to a less sophisticated, but not less intelligent age.

❖ **Extras** Highlights include *Behind The Barrier*, an excellent feature-length documentary, a fan-made mini-episode, and a

featurette which returns the cast to the location. You also get footage from a 2007 convention, PDFs of scripts and production paperwork, text features, and a gallery. The set also comes with a limited edition 128-page series guide by TV historian Andrew Pixley. **Paul Kirkley**

i In 2015, Spencer Banks and Cheryl Burfield resumed their *Timeslip* roles for a cameo in the film *Amityville Playhouse*.



Sushi restaurants: can be cruel.

LOVE & PEACE

Turtle Power

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Sion Sono

▶ Cast Hiromi Hasegawa, Kumiko Asô, Toshiyuki Nishida, Kiyohiko Shibukawa

▶ Pixar's *Toy Story* films

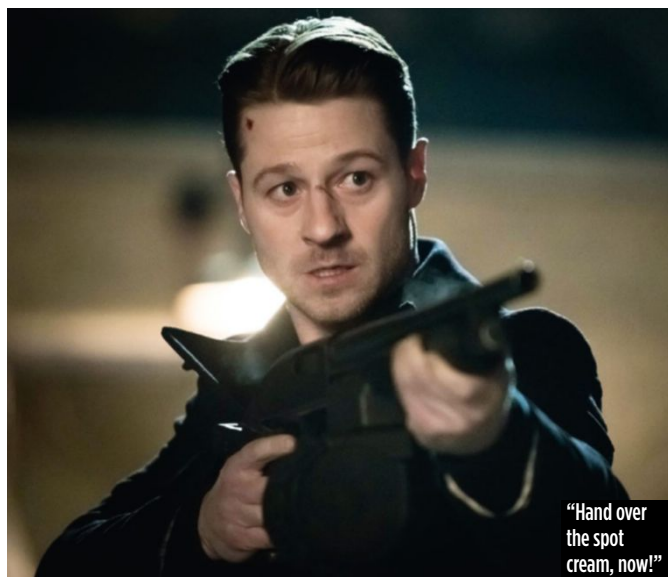
were one take on the concept of sentient toys with a life of their own – and old, thrown-away toys mourning their lost owners and the love they once knew. This Japanese film is another; it couldn't be more different.

Ryoichi is a pathetic character, bullied at work and literally bowed down with the weight of his own self-loathing. He finds happiness in a pet turtle, Pikadon, to whom he whispers his dreams of rock stardom, but is left distraught when his tormentors at work force him to flush the turtle away. Pikadon is washed to an underground lost and found, full of abandoned toys and pets that have been given speech by the mysterious – and alcoholic – Pa. But instead of speech, Pa gives Pikadon the power to grant wishes, and Ryoichi's life starts to get a whole lot better...

Surprisingly dark in places, this surreal adventure often feels like several film genres in one, from the painful office relationships to the fantastical toy workshop to the inevitable Kaiju city destruction. Packed full of imagination and style, it never quite hits the spot, but has some good fun trying.

▶ **Extras** A special effects featurette (24 minutes) and the trailer. **Rhian Drinkwater**

“Pikadon” refers to the nuclear bomb detonations on Japan – Pika meaning brilliant light, and don meaning boom.



“Hand over the spot cream, now!”

GOTHAM Season Two

The silly season

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 1 AUGUST**

2015-2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download

▶ Showrunner Bruno Heller

▶ Cast Ben McKenzie, David Mazouz, Donal Logue, Robin Lord Taylor, Morena Baccarin

▶ **For a show as dark as *Gotham***, its second season comes as rather a surprise. Sure, there's all the gritty misery, murder and mayhem from its first year, but now reality has been nudged just a little bit further to the side and the ridiculousness is inexorably rising. If this continues, by season four *Gotham* will be into full-on Adam West territory.

The reason for the uplift in craziness? A focus on the villains. Cory Michael Smith's twitchy Edward Nygma gets a huge arc, careening towards his final “Riddler” moniker and having a ball along the way. We get to meet Mr Freeze, so reserved that he's like an anti-Arnie Freeze, but with a mission that's plain bonkers. Reliable genre guest star James Frain oozes smarm and outlandish schemes as *Gotham*'s new mayor (although possibly outstays his welcome...). Apparent proto-Joker

Jerome (Cameron Monaghan) goes on the rampage in a clever run of episodes that leave us befuddled, enchanted and not a little confused. And let's not forget Robin Lord Taylor's superb Penguin, who still shines despite a dalliance with Arkham Asylum that takes away some of his sparkle. Oh, and then there's Arkham itself – the goings-on in there are as daft as you could hope for if you've read the comics. Utterly ludicrous.

All of this means there's precious little room for Bruce Wayne: he's there, and he's doing things, but you don't really care. Thankfully James Gordon's journey has a little more oomph – he's like a man possessed by the end – but *Gotham*'s decision to make season two all about the bad guys is definitely the winner here.

▶ **Extras** An hour and a half of stuff including the show's 2015 Comic-Con panel, three featurettes (one on its noir look, one on Alfred and one about Mr Freeze) and some character featurettes.

Jayne Nelson

Jim's pregnant girlfriend Lee (Morena Baccarin), was really having Ben McKenzie's baby! Daughter Frances was born in March.

(ROUND UP)



Three reissues to tell you about, commencing with **THE WRATH OF KHAN: DIRECTOR'S CUT** (out now, Blu-ray). We surely don't need to tell you that the second *Trek* film is the best. Nicholas Meyer's longer edit, previously only on DVD, reinstates about four minutes of trims, none earth-shattering; one establishes that a crewman who dies is Scotty's nephew. This new edition should please fans, as it has a less blue-tinted hue than the previous HD release. Also includes the theatrical cut, old extras, and a new half-hour Making Of. There's also a new 30th Anniversary Edition of **HIGHLANDER** (Blu-ray, out now), the 1986 fantasy in which Christopher Lambert discovers that a) he's an immortal warrior and b) Sean Connery can't do a Spanish accent. Newly remastered (like *Khan*) from a 4K scan, it bumps up the bonuses with new interviews with Lambert and the director. In 1985's **COCOON** (Blu-ray, out now), retirement home residents are rejuvenated by swimming in the pool of neighbours who, unbeknownst to them, are aliens. It's a simple tale with some excellent effects; your enjoyment level will depend on your tolerance for sentimentality. The extras (including commentary) are all carried over from a 2010 release. Finally, **ALIEN 2: ON EARTH** (Blu-ray, out now) is nothing to do with Ridley Scott; it's a low-budget 1980 Italian horror about a slimy ET devouring cavers. There's some juicy gore but generally slow stuff happens slowly, and tension is kept to a minimum. It's still more likeable than *Alien 3* though.



DARK MATTER

Lighting out in the multiverse



► **RELEASED 11 AUGUST**

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Blake Crouch**

► Publisher **Macmillan**

❖ **When Michael Crichton died** in 2008, the world was robbed of the master of what we might call the cutting-edge ideas thriller. Forget Crichton's latter-day excursion into climate change denial in *State Of Fear*, in his pomp he was brilliantly adept at finding pop-fictional takes on abstract ideas: complexity theory in *The Lost World* or the experiential economy in *Timeline*.

Indeed, the more time that goes by, the more he seems an outlier, possibly the only true master of the cutting-edge ideas thriller. Which isn't to say writers haven't tried to follow his example. Philip Kerr once looked as if he might follow Crichton's path, but latterly seems to have turned largely to crime fiction.

Now step forward Blake Crouch, the author of *Wayward Pines* and a man who began *Dark Matter* as a way to grapple with quantum physics and the many-worlds theory. These are subjects where, from a human perspective, the weirdness is intrinsic, bound up

with the unsettling uncertainty of what's going on at atomic and subatomic levels.

For writers, part of the appeal here lies in the idea that characters can step into parallel worlds. Accordingly this is now a well-worn SF trope, but most writers waft their hands over the details of the actual physics, the better to distract you from inconsistencies where more explanation might slow the plot down.

Crouch, though – as Crichton might have done – puts the science front and centre via the two contrasting lives of the same character: Jason Dessen. In one universe, Dessen is a college physics teacher, a man who gave up a promising research career when he got married and became a father. In another world, he became a research whiz and built a machine (think the Schrödinger's cat thought experiment) that enables people to

“Crouch is a better writer than this”

travel between different worlds in the multiverse. Dessen the teacher is kidnapped and taken to Dessen the researcher's world.

You can see why Blake chose this set-up. It's an easy idea to grasp, even when you're reading on a crowded train or bus. And yet there's a weakness intrinsic to it too. In presenting Dessen's life choices as essentially binary, as being about happiness versus success – at least at the beginning of the novel – Crouch edits out the kind of complexity Crichton would have tried to sneak in. Worse, he edits out human complexity. Life isn't just about success or failure; it's a question of degree. Even Paul McCartney, it's said, felt a little inadequate when confronted with the flowering of Brian Wilson's genius on *Pet Sounds*.

This sensation of reading a book that's aiming too low is only emphasised by Crouch's writing style.

He likes short paragraphs.

He likes short paragraphs a lot.

Every so often he writes a paragraph that's two or three sentences long. This varies the pace a little. It also gives him the chance occasionally to explain things that are difficult to get across in short paragraphs.

The irritating thing is that Crouch is a better writer than this. His plotting is terrific and when he slows down long enough to do some character building you get hints of a far richer, more accomplished novel.

But let's not be too critical. Compared with Crouch's earlier work, there's a huge leap in ambition here. In addition, the book seems primed for sequels, so perhaps we should reserve judgment until we've seen those. Plus, having criticised his writing style, it seems only fair to acknowledge that, in the final 100 pages or so, it drives the narrative forward brilliantly.

Neither failure nor triumph then, but a solid place to build from, in itself perhaps a reminder that life in this part of the multiverse is often complicated, non-binary. **Jonathan Wright**

i Hugh Everett, pioneer of the many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics, was the dad of Eels frontman Mark Oliver Everett.



UNDERGROUND AIRLINES

The Emancipation Alteration



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

368 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Ben H Winters**

► Publisher **Century**

❖ **Author Ben H Winters cites**

The Man In The High Castle as an influence on this alternate history novel, in which slavery remains legal in the southern states of America. But while he must have written it before the Amazon TV adaptation aired, *Underground Airlines* feels more like the show than Philip K Dick's novel: world-building wins over plot.

The world it builds is very impressive. This is a carefully considered, micro-detailed examination of a modern America where those pesky Southerners have maintained their right to treat fellow men like subhumans (even if it does ignore how the rest of the world might react). It doesn't always take the obvious route, and cleverly uses a morally-dubious black man who tracks down escaped slaves in return for freedom as its protagonist. This holds a much better mirror to the situation than using some bleeding-heart liberal would, and Victor is a compelling, multi-layered character.

But it's woefully light on plot. There's a conspiracy thriller vibe but not enough story for a 45-minute TV episode, and it ends with a crunching gear shift into a more pulpy genre. It almost feels like a spec script for a Netflix pilot. **Dave Golder**

i An emergency system in the book is named after Nat Turner, who led a slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831.



THE IMPOSSIBLE HAS HAPPENED

Roddenberry reappraisal



► **RELEASED 21 JULY**

390 pages | Hardback

► Author **Lance Parkin**

► Publisher **Aurum Press**

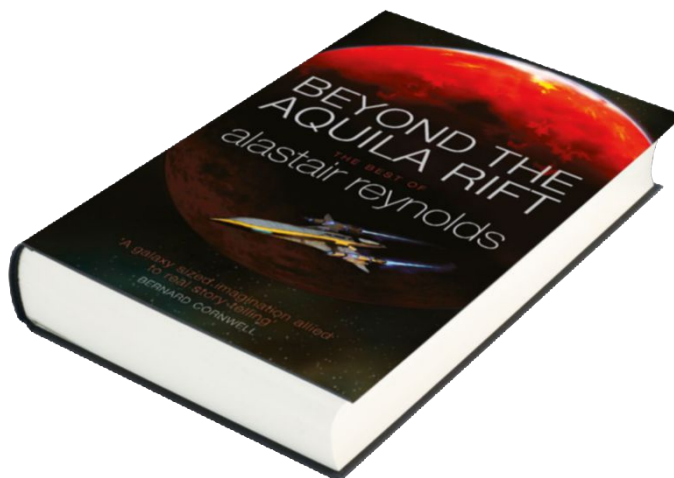
☛ **Do we really need another** book on *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry? Not long after his death in 1991 came both an approving official biography and an unofficial one which hurled rocks at his statue. Any fresh work can surely only triangulate between the two, so what's the point?

True, Lance Parkin's portrait doesn't tell us much new, being completely based on pre-existing interviews. The focus is more on the work than the man, and at times, as Roddenberry is pushed to the margins of the franchise, it can start to read like just another history of *Trek*.

However it does a good job of making a dialectic between "Roddenberry was a visionary genius and philanthropist" and "Roddenberry was a chiseller and control freak, of limited talent". And while the book celebrates *Trek* it's also fearless at puncturing the fan myths it's accreted about itself (many propagated by Roddenberry himself), such as the notion that the original series is uniquely philosophically sophisticated (something easily disproved by simply watching it).

The result is a well-argued, fair and highly readable summation. **Ian Berriman**

i The title is a nod to second pilot "Where No Man Has Gone Before" – it's the first four words of the captain's log.



BEYOND THE AQUILA RIFT

Short fiction, big notions



► **RELEASED 21 JULY**

784 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Alastair Reynolds**

► Publisher **Gollancz**

☛ **There's always something** ironic about the kind of weighty volume that seeks to gather up the best of an established novelist's shorter work. But don't let the sheer heft of Al Reynolds's new collection (20 stories, seven previously uncollected) put you off because, in addition to being one of our best SF novelists, he's also turned out some spellbinding shorter fiction down the years.

For proof, newcomers to Reynolds's fictional world should turn immediately to the novella "Diamond Dogs". It's a story that, according to a "Story Notes" afterward, was inspired by mountaineering and "the peculiar allure of dangerous spaces". In Reynolds's hands, this raw idea becomes a tale of adrenaline junkies trying to solve the mysteries of an unforgiving alien artefact. It's a tale that, as it moves towards its unsettling conclusion, confirms what many readers think

they know about Reynolds: that he brings a visceral, new weird-infused quality to hard SF. The prose of China Miéville, Reynolds has said, had a big effect on his writing.

Yet perhaps this obscures some of Reynolds' other strengths as a writer. Rereading 2000's "Great Wall Of Mars" reminds you how often Reynolds's stories are character-driven. Even now, that's surprisingly rare in the field.

Elsewhere, the collection finds space for stories from throughout Reynolds's career, ranging from "Thousandth Night", a kind of precursor to the far future-set *House Of Suns*, to the Mundane SF future-history of "The Water Thief" and the idea of a space probe handling its own media profile that underpins "In Babelsberg".

Taken together, it's a book that reads like both a summation of what's gone before and a clearing of the throat before the next stage of Reynolds's career – and also proof that he's as good a contemporary SF novelist as we have. **Jonathan Wright**

i Next: *Revenger* (due September), a space pirate story where humanity is thriving amid the ruins of alien civilisations.



THE DRAGON ROUND

Scales of justice



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

320 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Stephen S Power**

► Publisher **Simon & Schuster**

☛ **It's a rare but wonderful** experience to come across a truly excellent fantasy novel. Stephen S Power's debut is assuredly one. Though touted as *The Count Of Monte Cristo* with dragons, the description does the story little justice. This isn't *The Stars My Destination* done over for the swords and horses crowd – which would be cool – but something original.

Jeryon is a sea captain from a hyper-capitalist city state whose crew's greed prompts mutiny during a mission undertaken partly for mercy, partly for profit. He is marooned, together with the ship's apothecary, on a distant island, where the pair discover a rare dragon hatchling. Jeryon undertakes to train it and his thoughts turn to vengeance.

Though Power's world is small in scale, the relations between its states are complicated by proper economics and histories, bringing a welcome dash of reality to this often overly romantic genre. The book's written in a gripping present tense, the characters are fantastic, and there's a brilliant heroine in the shape of the apothecary. This is George RR Martin-style fantasy in all the good ways. Highly recommended. **Guy Haley**

i Power is also an editor for a business publisher, commissioning books like *The 10 Golden Rules Of Leadership*.



THE RACE

Genre-bending stories-in-stories

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

448 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author **Nina Allan**

► Publisher **Titan Books**

☛ **For several years now, Nina Allan** has been making a name for herself with clever, layered short stories – especially among UK readers, as a 2014 British Science Fiction Association award for her novella *Spin* attests – as well as for thoughtfully probing book reviews. Her debut novel, originally published in 2014 by a small press, has now been reissued in a revised, expanded edition, and it's the perfect showcase both for her interest in how stories work, and for the skill and sheer readability of her writing.

Like much of Allan's fiction, *The Race* is very carefully constructed, the sort of book that reveals more of itself the more you think about it. (Far from everything, though – if you're the sort of reader who prefers all mysteries to be solved by the final page, you'll come away from this one disappointed. In that respect, at least.) There are five parts to the novel – four first-person narratives centred on four different characters, plus the 70 pages of the new "appendix" – and each part

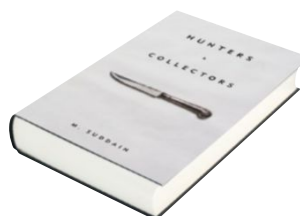
builds upon, refracts, and challenges the others, in ways that are endlessly fascinating but tricky to synthesise.

The tense and melancholy first part takes place in an alternative future England, in a south-coast town devastated by the side-effects of fracking, whose economy has become dependent on a mixture of dark tourism, illegal drugs and the racing of genetically enhanced "smartdogs" (hounds modified so they can communicate telepathically with their "runners"). Then we learn it was all just a story written by the protagonist of part two – but this narrator's presentation of things is, in turn, called into question by what we see later. Keeping track of parallels and contradictions is half the fun.

The Race can be read in multiple different ways: as a tale of parallel worlds, of families breaking apart, of the refuge of imagination when reality is too hard to bear. It'll grip you and scramble your brain, and do it all with some stunningly beautiful imagery. What more could you want from genre fiction?

Nic Clarke

i A key inspiration for the book was the 2000 film *Amores Perros*, part of which centres on dogfighting in Mexico City.



HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

Eat or be eaten

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

512 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **M Suddain**

► Publisher **Jonathan Cape**

☛ **Riffing off our current** obsession with foodiness, Matt Suddain's second novel has "forensic gastronomer" J Salvador Tamberlain, aka "The Tomahawk", at its heart. He's both a fearless critic and a man on a mission: to find the Hotel Grand Skies, a secretive establishment for the rich and famous, and a place where the standards are brutally high.

And Tamberlain needs to be brave, because the universe he moves through, located just off our own, is a place of William Burroughs-infused strangeness and Ballardian outbreaks of staccato violence. It's also a place Suddain describes with droll flourishes: at Misty's Spice Boutique, the food is so "bland and inambitious" that Tamberlain doubts "it'll ever aspire to become shit".

There are moments when all this becomes infuriating, when you want him to dial back the weirdness. And yet, there are countless formulaic books out there. Mixing the techniques of literary fiction and genre, Suddain is aiming to get someplace new – rather like the protagonists of his first two novels, probably not uncoincidentally. This time around, he doesn't always make it, but you want him to keep trying. **Jonathan Wright**

i We couldn't find a good fact about Matt Suddain. So here's a cute photo of him as a kid. Aw. <http://bitly/mattsuddain>

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



THE WORZEL BOOK

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

342 pages | Paperback

► Author **Stuart Manning**

► Publisher **Miwi Publishing**

- This exceptionally good making-of book puts the spotlight on Third Doctor Jon Pertwee's other big TV series: *Worzel Gummidge*.
- Also covers late '80s Kiwi spin-off *Worzel Gummidge Down Under*.
- Meticulously researched, it uses archive documents for both the companies who made the show.
- Also draws on dozens of new interviews with cast and crew – plus Pertwee's son, Sean.
- Very well illustrated, with design sketches, on-set Polaroids, and ephemera.
- The lion's share is an episode guide – which even details script edits.
- Also looks at previous BBC *Worzels* (for both radio and TV), a 1979 musical, a never-made Irish TV series, and the *Look-In* strip.
- Great fact one: they once offered a role to Kate Bush!
- Great fact two: *Worzel's* unsightly warts were actually Sugar Puffs.



Reviews



THE HATCHING

Eight Legged Freaks



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

304 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Ezekiel Boone

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ **As lurid plot hooks go,** “killer spiders” alone would be enough to get a major proportion of the audience shivering in fear, but new thriller *The Hatching* doesn’t stop there. The arachnids in question aren’t just deadly – they’re also relentless flesh-eating parasites that are soon wreaking major havoc in this ludicrously entertaining blend of disaster epic and creature-feature B-movie.

The basic concept is that an ancient species of spider is woken from a lengthy slumber, and quickly spreads across the globe. As Delhi is overrun and China starts dropping nuclear bombs to contain the outbreak, the spider swarms arrive on American soil, and it’s up to a small group of disparate characters to discover some way of fighting back.

A sprawling and shamelessly compulsive adventure, this is a pleasingly fast-paced read that manages to combine smoothly crafted prose and sharp details with a selection of entertainingly gruesome shocks. The first in a series, *The Hatching* sometimes reads more like a TV pilot and could have benefitted from a smaller, more tightly focused cast of characters, but it’s also a rollicking thrill-ride that will leave you hungering for the next volume. **Saxon Bullock**

i Ezekiel Boone is a pseudonym for Alexi Zentner, who teaches at New York State’s Binghamton University.



SOUTH

The North/South divided



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

411 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Frank Owen

► Publisher Corvus Books

❖ **In an America where the** civil war ended with the country split in twain, a second eruption of hostilities in the 21st century culminates in the North unleashing a wave of biological attacks. For brothers Dyce and Garrett, the plague of viruses is the least of their troubles, as they’re on the run from the Callahan clan, the most powerful militia in the decaying South. Sheltering from a storm, they meet Vida, who’s searching for medicine for her infected mother, and the three decide there might be safety in numbers.

South might not contain any zombies, but it offers numerous comparisons with *The Walking Dead*. Alongside the post-civilisation backdrop, redneck siblings Dyce and Garrett have a fractious relationship like Daryl and Merle Dixon. There’s a settlement that appears to offer safe haven but holds a dark secret and, just like in *TWD*, the principle danger comes from other humans, not the invisible pathogens.

The prose is plain but direct and the passages told from the perspective of the infected deliriously evoke the heat of a raging fever. Although some plot turns are predictable, there’s a constant, creeping sense of menace, plus enough fresh ideas to give *South* its own identity. **David West**

i “Frank Owen” is really a two-writer team: Diane Awerbuck and Alex Latimer. They hail from South Africa.

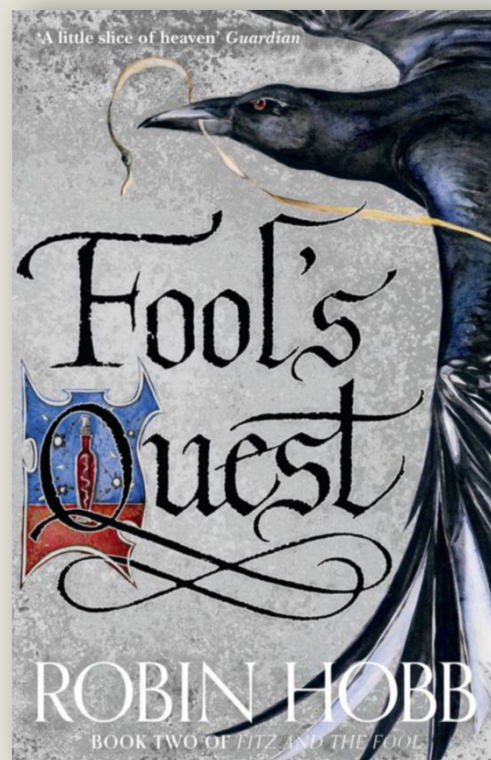
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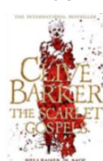
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REISSUES

Of this month's paperbacks, the one with the biggest profile is undoubtedly Clive Barker's **THE SCARLET GOSPELS**



(★★★★★, 28 July, Pan), which sees the return of nail-nutted horror icon Pinhead. Initially the

book is centred on mystical detective Harry D'Amour, but gradually the Cenobite becomes the focus – and there's a definitive ending for the character. We said: "Exciting, vivid and brutal... the grandest *Hellraiser* movie never made." Meanwhile, if you loved *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* you'll probably also enjoy Zen Cho's debut.

SORCERER TO THE CROWN (★★★★★,



28 July, Pan). The first in a trilogy set in a Regency England in which magic is real, it centres on a

girl trapped in a boarding school that teaches its pupils to suppress their magical ability. We said: "Utterly delightful... A smart, gleefully fun tale that fizzles with energy and engages the brain."

We also recommend another debut: Natasha Pulley's **THE WATCHMAKER OF FILIGREE STREET**



(★★★★★, out now, Bloomsbury). This whimsical fantasy set in Victorian London is

centred on a Japanese watchmaker who appears to be able to predict the future... We said: "A delightful read, that benefits from colourful characters and a lyrical prose style full of esoteric detail." Also worth a look are a couple of classics: Ursula Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985, out now) and Marge Piercy's *Woman On The Edge Of Time* (1976, 11 August).



THE HIGH GROUND

Military academy hijinks

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

419 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Melinda Snodgrass

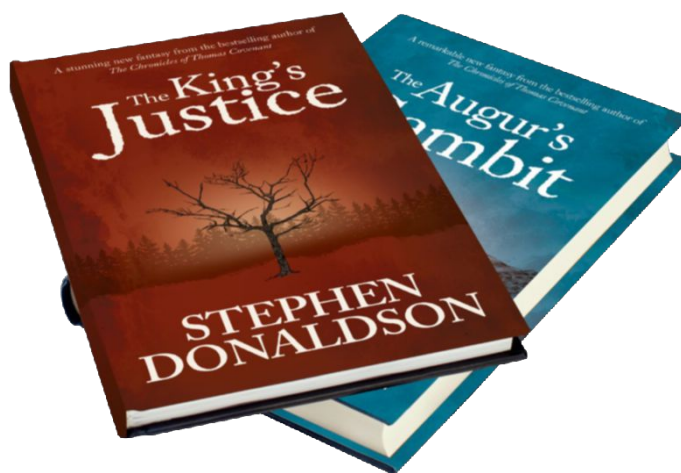
► Publisher Titan Books

✶ *Starship Troopers* with a dash of *Sweet Valley High*, *The High Ground* takes us into a future dominated by the princely descendants of modern-day corporate CEOs. Battles with several extraterrestrial races drove the creation of a feudal aristocracy. Now mankind rules the stars, these new toffs are well bedded in to society... Until now! The Emperor, short of a male heir, sets the established order all-a-wobble by sending his eldest daughter to the High Ground, the starship academy where the scions of noble houses are trained to discharge their military duties.

This is the kind of old-fashioned, rollicking space opera that right-wing SF protest groups would love, if there weren't so many women and non-whites in it. A little, forced, thoughtfulness is present in Princess Mercedes's struggle against the established patriarchal order, but in the main the US military academy story template holds sway. Romance comes in the form of Tracy, a scholarship student who has his own battle against class to fight.

The writing is initially breathless, but settles well. The result is a slickly penned, fun book with solid characters. Entertaining, though not world-changing. **Guy Haley**

i Melinda Snodgrass also wrote several episodes of *Star Trek: TNG* – including an episode called "The High Ground".



THE KING'S JUSTICE/ THE AUGUR'S GAMBIT

Donaldson duo differ

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

128/192 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Stephen Donaldson

► Publisher Gollancz

✶ The term "*Gordian Knot*" comes from Alexander the Great's approach to disentangling an impossible knot – he cut it in two. *The King's Justice* and *The Augur's Gambit* have experienced their own Gordian Knot. Packaged in the States as one book, they've been separated for the UK release.

We can see why. *The King's Justice* is a ridiculously enjoyable magical tale, packed with reveals we don't want to spoil here. It follows a man in black – called Black – who arrives in a village to investigate a murder. The

mysterious man's special gifts aid him on his quest, but could be used against him... It's smart, violent and moving, with brilliant twists skilfully delivered over the course of its 128 pages.

The Augur's Gambit is a longer, more tangled affair. As fans of the author will attest, Stephen Donaldson is an incredible writer, and reading *Gambit* directly after *Justice* highlights his talent.

Following entrails-reading soothsayer Mayhew Gordian as he moves to save a doomed kingdom, it's a completely different experience: slower, with more complicated language, and a less likeable lead – making it tougher to get through. Despite his bleak genius, Gordian's just not as much fun as Black.

Which brings us to that Knot – these stories don't flow. We might be reviewing them as a double-bill, but you shouldn't read them that way. Buy both and read something else in-between, splitting them into separate, rewarding, experiences. **Sam Ashurst**

i As a young man, Donaldson wrote a fan fiction novella based on Marvel's Thor (plus one based on *Heart Of Darkness*).



THE INTERMINABLES

The war to end all wars

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

416 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Paige Orwin

► Publisher Angry Robot

Some fantasy novels want to show off their worldbuilding, filling every page with explanations of magic and battles, explaining in detail their history and rules. Others just give you little hints; a bit of history here, a bit of magic theory there, letting you do the work of building this into a detailed world. *The Interminables* is one of the latter – and it's all the better for it.

Edmund Templeton is a wizard, survivor of the Wizard War – which isn't surprising, as he's also immortal. Known as the Hour Thief, he takes snippets of time from others and uses it to prolong his own life. He struggles to help restore a world devastated by the after-effects of war, helped by his friend Istvan Czernin, a "Conceptual" who in some ways is the ghost of a long-dead Hungarian doctor and in others an (often terrifying) avatar of the entire First World War.

This isn't always an easy book to read, and the lack of further details and explanations can be frustrating at times. Stick with it, though, and it will reward you with a world of wonders and horrors, alongside a tale of a deep and desperate friendship: a thief and a war, trying their best to save as many lives as they can. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i This novel came out of Orwin's love of now-closed MMORPG *City Of Heroes*: she wanted to preserve her characters.



VIGIL

The Weyrd Dick Of Oz

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

368 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Angela Slatter

► Publisher Jo Fletcher Books

When *Angel* first span off from *Buffy*, it was a noirish supernatural private detective show – then epic arc plots took over and it developed into something very different. *Vigil* is very much like those early *Angel* episodes, except with a female lead (very *not* *Buffy*... think more Winona Ryder in *Beetlejuice*) and set in Brisbane.

It's the first in the Verity Fassbinder series, and Verity is the best thing about the book. A half-Weyrd/half-human hybrid, she's a surly, straight-talking, Doc Marten-wearing punchbag who investigates Weyrd-related crime on behalf of the beleaguered "normal" police. She's an adorably flawed creation with a great turn of phrase that's part Chandler, part Whedon: "I reckoned she could spit and cause an injury."

The Brisbane she inhabits is a pretty standard urban fantasy melting pot of angels, harpies and other mythical creatures, but it's a rich, detailed world full of colourful characters, and fun to explore. What lets the book down is a plot that starts as a hardboiled supernatural crime but escalates into a confused mess of intertwining apocalyptic threats and overegged conspiracies. But Verity herself emerges with dignity intact, and it'll be interesting to see what's next for her. **Dave Golder**

i Verity first appeared in Slatter's 2009 short story "Brisneyland By Night". Read it at <http://bit.ly/brisneyland>.



HOPE AND RED

Welcome to Paradise

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

512 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Jon Skovron

► Publisher Orbit

After watching the entire population of her village die in agony at the hands of the Emperor's biomancers, Hope is set on a path for vengeance, living first in a male-only monastery and then aboard a lively trader's ship. Orphaned at around the same age, Red grows up in the slums, becoming a cunning thief and loveable ne'er-do-well.

Though the two only meet halfway through *Hope And Red*, their separate adventures don't feel like stalling before the main event. And the main event itself, once they are united against the empire, is an action-packed riot of swordfighting, knife-throwing and, well, literal riots. There are a few moments that feel a little too convenient to be entirely believable, but those can be overlooked in the face of the compelling characters and tense action.

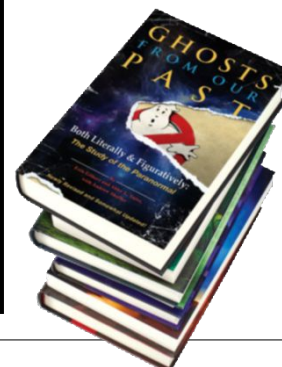
One thing that really stands out is the unusual slang peppered throughout the book, particularly in Red's chapters. It feels completely natural and quickly immerses you into life in the slums of Paradise Circle; next time you're down the pub you may struggle to keep yourself from calling good friends "old pot" or telling them they're a "true wag". Gripping and, most importantly, fun.

Bridie Roman

i Download PDFs of the first two chapters of *Hope And Red* from here: <http://bit.ly/hopeandred>.

ALSO OUT

The big release this month is the script of **HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD** (31 July, Little Brown) – but that's being kept under wraps. Bah. Then there's **AND I DARKEN** (out now, Penguin), basically a gender-swapped version of the early life of Vlad the Impaler. Author Kiersten White has clearly done her historical research, and spun the results into an entertaining YA story – but the genderswapping is the only fantastic element. Jen Williams's *Copper Cat* trilogy concludes in **THE SILVER TIDE** (out now, Headline). Book one's old-fashioned dungeoneering made a nice change from grimdark; expect more "undemanding fun". Peter F Hamilton does YA fantasy again in **THE HUNTING OF THE PRINCES** (28 July, Macmillan), a follow-up to *The Queen Of Dreams*, which saw kids rescue their dad from the land of Faerie. Light-hearted *Ghostbusters* tie-in **GHOSTS FROM OUR PAST** (out now, Penguin) mixes backstory for the film's paranormal experts with a history of ghosts and fun stuff. Gardner Dozois's annual anthology **THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BEST NEW SF 29** (out now, Robinson) includes 33 stories, while the 15 tales of **DROWNED WORLDS** (out now, Solaris) are set in futures reshaped by climate change. Finally Jeff and Ann Vandermeer's **THE BIG BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION** (out now, Vintage) has a whopping 99 stories, many in English for the first time.



THE HIGH GROUND

by Melinda Snodgrass

A brand-new space opera set in a future world of political intrigue and alien threats, by the scriptwriter of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Emperor's daughter Mercedes and scholarship boy Tracy have just arrived at The High Ground military academy, where they will soon find that many want them to fail...

They were flying closer to the Apex *cosmódromo*. The space station was immense. There was a fat central hub that extended above and below the central ring. Four large spokes attached the bulbous ring to the hub, and eight massive cables stretched from the central ring to the top and bottom of the hub. Two stubby legs jutted out from the base of the hub in a V shape. Each cylinder ended in two round pill-like structures that looked to be about four stories high. Extending from the top third of the hub were vast solar arrays comprised of interlinking hexagonal panels like glittering blue and gold wings. They gave the illusion that the *cosmódromo* was some kind of exotic spacefaring insect.

Tracy knew that one of those circular

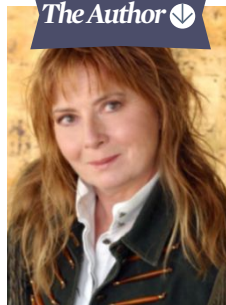
structures at the base of the hub held the academy. The other held the *cosmódromo's* plant facilities – water recycling, oxygen production, waste disposal, and the fields that grew fresh food to help provide oxygen and also recycle the waste as fertilizer. The fresh food grown there also landed on the tables of the restaurants that served travelers, the students and the alien support staff of the *cosmódromo*.

The ring was basically an upscale spaceport for those making their way from distant worlds to the League capital or transferring onto ships to other worlds. In addition to restaurants and stores there were also hotels, casinos, and joy houses, which were technically illegal on a planet's surface, but completely legal on a *cosmódromo* or at a military *Estrella Avanzada* or “star port” as the aliens termed them.

They were again in the midst of traffic. Everything from wallowing, fat-bellied freighters to elegant racing pinnaces, luxury space liners and utilitarian shuttles. All were dwarfed by the *cosmódromo*. The ships converged on the Apex *cosmódromo* like silver bees returning from a day's labor, and vanished into the hive of docking bays. Their shuttle broke away from the pack and headed toward the docking bays that lined the circumference of the module housing The High Ground.

The klaxon sounded, three sharp bleats.

The Author



→ Melinda Snodgrass is the acclaimed author of many science fiction novels, including the *Circuit* and *Edge* series. She has had a long career in television, serving as the story editor on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and has written scripts for numerous other shows. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Front thrusters fired and the shuttle slowly slipped into a bay.

He had made it. Now he just had to *really* make it.

They had been met on the shuttle by an *estrella hombre* who had told them he would guide them to the quadrangle for muster. He had taken the lead and Mercedes and her ladies trailed after him like desperate ducklings. The metal decking rang beneath their boot heels, the sound driving like a spike into Mercedes' temples and making her nausea worse. She had not enjoyed zero gee. Only Sumiko had managed the flight without vomiting.

They were led down a curving corridor, through another set of sliding doors and into a flagstoned courtyard with a viewing platform at one end and jet columns all around the sides. It was filled with a seething mass of young men in uniform.

Their voices were a rising and

falling cadence of bass and tenor sounds with an occasional outbreak of nervous high-pitched laughter.

That was when she saw him. It was the boy from the beach. His back was against a column as if trying to merge into the stone. His fair hair stood out against the dark surface, and his uniform was a cheap pale blue unlike the midnight blue of the others. A scholarship boy. He turned his head and looked at her, and Mercedes held her breath, but not by the

smallest quiver of a muscle did he indicate that he knew her. She felt herself relax. Then her view of Tracy was blocked by an expanse of chest.

"Highness," the man said, and kissed her hand. The green eyes were dancing with enjoyment as he glanced at her from beneath his lashes.

"Hello, Boho." Mercedes wasn't a small woman, but Beauregard Honorius Sinclair Cullen always made her feel so.

"Let me be the first to welcome you."

"I rather think that honor belongs to the commandant, not a mere cadet," she said dryly, and was pleased when his cheeks turned a dull red. Boho's conceit was legendary.

An upperclassman stopped by her and Boho, and executed a perfect court bow.

"Ladies, if I may escort you to the front."

He indicated the raised platform at one end of the room.

There was a door in the center of the wall behind the dais. To either side were flags. On the right was the flag of the Solar League which was blue/green with tiny globes all around the edges, and a cross of gold in the center. On the left was the flag of the *Orden de la Estrella*. It showed the Milky Way galaxy with a spear thrusting through its center, and over the door was the seal of The High Ground, a spaceship lifting on a plume of fire. Its landing pad was an open book, and on either side were crossed rifles.

Mercedes inclined her head. "If you will excuse us, Boho."

As their guide led them through the milling crowd, Mercedes looked for the boy from the beach. He was being shoved into place at the very back of the crowd by a cadet whose stripes indicated he was a second-year. Tracy's head was thrown back, chin up, glaring at the upperclassman.

The mumble of conversation subsided when Vice Admiral Conde Sergei Arrington Vasquez y Markov emerged through the door in the wall at the back of the dais. He was an imposing figure, tall and very broad, though some of it was due to a thrusting belly. Light gleamed on his nearly hairless skull.

"Welcome to The High Ground." He paused and swept them all with a ferocious

blue-eyed gaze. "This institution has stood for three hundred and forty-one years. First on the surface of old Earth, then on Ouranos, and for the past seventy-three years aboard this orbital station. Ours is a proud tradition. We honor the past. We also train officers and heroes for the challenges of the future. We have always been willing to embrace change in an effort to defend the Solar League and the billions of humans who live under its protection. This year we welcome a new change. This year The High Ground and the *Orden de la Estrella* welcomes the first class of women to these hallowed halls. Highness." He saluted Mercedes.

Her hand rose in the accustomed royal gesture of acknowledgment. Then she tried to turn it into a salute, misjudged and knocked her hat off. There was the briefest ripple of laughter. Mercedes choked back a flare of anger.

"God save the Emperor!"

"God save the Emperor," several hundred male voices roared out.

“The klaxon sounded, three sharp beats. Now he just had to *really* make it”

Another man took Markov's place, as spare as the admiral had been broad. "I am Captain Lord Manfred Zeng. I am in charge of operations at the academy. First a few rules. Reveille at five thirty a.m., breakfast followed by physical training. Classes begin at nine hundred. Lunch at thirteen hundred. In the afternoon there will be more classes and drills. Dinner is at nineteen hundred. The evenings are yours. I suggest you use them to do homework. No one is permitted down the gravity-well until three months have passed.

You are permitted in the civilian areas of the

station on Saturdays. Services on Sunday are mandatory. No male cadets will be permitted within five hundred feet of the ladies' quarters."

Or what? Mercedes wondered.

"Please leave through the planetside doors. Tonight there is a welcoming banquet, dress uniform required as the Emperor will be attending. Dismissed!"

Mercedes and her ladies found themselves in a bubble, separated from their classmates by ten or fifteen feet. At least for now the men were reacting as if the women were toxic.

"Well damn. It's going to be hard to find a husband now," Cipriana said. Danica once again seemed on the verge of tears.

"We're trained to impress them while dancing," Sumiko said.

"Surely we can manage to make an impression during hand-to-hand combat training."

Mercedes stayed silent. In addition to *don't fail* there had been another instruction her father had given her. *Find a consort. Pick the man who will share the throne with you. To protect yourself against the conservatives he will have to be a military leader. I can give you the throne. He will help you keep it.* ●

To find out what happens next, pick up *The High Ground*, out now from Titan Books. www.titanbooks.com



CIVIL WAR II

Spandex! Punching! Corporate synergy!



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Marvel Comics**

► Writer **Brian Michael Bendis**

► Artists **David Marquez, Justin Ponsor**

ISSUES 0-2 Big, over-the-top

“event” crossovers are a fact of life in mainstream superhero comics, and the saga that cemented this approach for Marvel was *Civil War*. A 2006/7 smash hit with an aftermath that affected the Marvel universe for years to come, *Civil War* is the yardstick that most subsequent event comics have been measured by – something that’s even harder to resist now that Marvel have finally hit the button marked “sequel”.

Civil War II is only a thematic follow-up, however – there are no real narrative connections, beyond a thorny moral question

that splits the superhero ranks and Iron Man’s presence as one of the main protagonists. We’re three issues in (including the “issue zero” prologue) and so far, *Civil War II* centres on the discovery of a new Inhuman named Ulysses, who seems to have the ability to predict disasters and supervillain crimes before they happen.

As far as Tony Stark is concerned, Ulysses has an untested power with potentially dangerous consequences, but Carol Danvers (aka Captain Marvel) sees him as a way to save lives, and uses his abilities to foil an attack from intergalactic tyrant Thanos. Unfortunately, this battle also results in the death of James “War Machine” Rhodes, Tony’s best friend, and what was previously a disagreement spirals

into a full-blown conflict where heroes have to pick sides.

The dilemma at the heart of *Civil War II* is a potentially interesting one – does knowledge of the future give you the right to change it? – but it also pushes the story into territory we’ve seen many times before. While veteran scripter Brian Michael Bendis tries hard to amp up the tension, assisted by gorgeous blockbuster-style visuals from artists David Marquez and Oliver Coipel, the central conflict plays as forced, contrived and over-familiar.

It doesn’t help that the original *Civil War*’s focus on superhero responsibility and secret identities gave it a strong, easily-grasped plot

“Lacks any real sense of freshness or genuine excitement”

hook. There were few simple answers to the moral questions that series raised, while this sequel seems to primarily exist thanks to corporate synergy – cashing in on the release of *Captain America: Civil War*.

The conflict here just isn’t as compelling, lacking any real sense of freshness or genuine excitement. It’s also easy to predict that Ulysses’ powers will ultimately have a dark side and that Tony Stark will be proven right in the end. *Civil War II* is a slickly produced superhero spectacle and might redeem itself in later issues, but right now it’s a lacklustre sequel that’s failing to escape the shadow of its predecessor. **Saxon Bullock**

i US cable channel Cinemax is currently developing a TV adaptation of Brian Michael Bendis’s gritty thriller comic *Scarlet*.



Even Terry Nutkins would leg it.

BEAST WAGON

Babylon Zoo



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Changeling Studios**

► Writer **Owen Michael Johnson**

► Artist **John Pearson**

ISSUES 1-4 Feasting and

fornication – that’s all life boils down to according to this visceral, hot-blooded series. Initially funded through Kickstarter, it proves that indie comics don’t necessarily have to use traditional distribution networks to succeed. With its compelling storyline, impressive art and high production values, *Beast Wagon* is as good as anything you find at Image or Dark Horse.

Set in the fictional Whipsnarl Zoo during a heatwave, each of the four issues to date has taken place over the course of an hour. As temperatures and tempers both rise, a looming ecological apocalypse begins to manifest, as we move towards the hottest time of the day.

Owen Michael Johnson deftly draws parallels between animals and humans as he puts words into the various creatures’ mouths, hilariously showing the contempt that the zoo’s residents have for visitors. It’s like *Animal Farm* crossed with *The Lion King*.

Meanwhile, artist John Pearson channels Dave McKean and Kent Williams, combining sharp linework with some evocative colour work that takes you into the hallucinatory mindset of the animal kingdom. With two issues to go, this is one bandwagon you’ll want to jump on. **Stephen Jewell**

i One key influence was ‘80s comic *The Puma Blues*, where animals have been mutated by a nuclear explosion.



The “Srabam” makes it extra painful.



HOW TO TALK TO GIRLS AT PARTIES

Brief Encounters
Of The Third Kind

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Dark Horse Comics

► Writers/Artists Fábio Moon,

Gabriel Bá

GRAPHIC NOVEL First published in 2006 collection *Fragile Things*, the charm of Neil Gaiman's short story is how it moves from the ordinary to the extraordinary. And there's little more ordinary than Croydon in the 1970s.

This original graphic novel by Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá expertly captures the wistful lyricism of Gaiman's prose. Keeping exposition to a minimum, they allow pictures and dialogue to mostly tell the tale while keeping the best bits of first-person narration.

It begins with the painfully shy Enn searching out a party and stumbling upon a house full of mysterious female exchange students. He gradually comes out of his shell, before it becomes evident that the "girls" might be from another planet.

It starts out as a warm-hearted kitchen sink drama, and Bá and Moon's vibrant cartooning is perfect for the more down-to-earth moments; then they really cut loose for some vividly-coloured, Jack Kirby-esque cosmic scenes. Gaiman's story is also currently being turned into a movie, but the filmmakers will be hard-pressed to come up with anything as good as this masterful adaptation.

Stephen Jewell

i John Cameron Mitchell is directing the film. The cast includes Elle Fanning, Ruth Wilson and Nicole Kidman.



Gwenpool: Like Deadpool, but with more pink.

THE UNBELIEVABLE GWENPOOL

Pool of talent

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Marvel Comics

► Writer Christopher Hastings

► Artist Gurihiru

ISSUES 1-3 *Gwenpool is the latest* in a line of comics never meant to be actual comics. There was *Spider-Gwen*, a one-off parallel-universe story where Peter's love interest Gwen Stacy has the spider-powers, and *DC Bombshells*, a series of retro WWII-style pin-ups reimagining DC's heroines. In both cases the audience said that, actually, they'd buy those comics. In the wake of *Spider-Gwen*, Marvel did variant covers of various heroes as Gwen Stacy. Deadpool became Gwenpool. What larks! But actually, she looks awesome. Could you make that a thing? And all these comics are female-led. Almost as if there's an underserved market crying out for books reflecting their tastes, isn't it?

That's how Marvel came to be publishing two unrelated books

with "Gwen" in the title. And this one's terrific. Gwen Poole is an eccentric young woman who comes from a universe where Marvel characters are... comics characters. She has no superpowers but she does know everyone's secrets, because she's been reading their comics, and she sets out to become a costumed mercenary.

So far, so meta. But the book doesn't ponce around waiting for you to tell it how clever it is – it's fast and funny. The art team Gurihiru is doing stunning work, combining cuteness (especially when it comes to Gwen herself, who's guilelessly sweet even when punching someone into a furnace), oddness and violence. And as the series goes on it feels like writer Christopher Hastings is giving it greater depth. It's a real oddity, but it could shape up into something special. **Eddie Robson**

i Hastings is best known for long-running webcomic *The Adventures Of Dr McNinja*. Read it at: <http://bit.ly/drmcninja>.



Okay, who let him watch *Question Time*?

MONSTER

Massive Attic

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Rebellion

► Writers Alan Moore, John Wagner,

Alan Grant

► Artists Heinzl, Jesus Redondo

GRAPHIC NOVEL Tune out the

hype: this isn't some long-lost masterwork by the mighty Alan Moore, finally disinterred from the dusty bowels of *Scream!* comic. In fact the Northampton magus only wrote the opening instalment before *Judge Dredd's* Wagner and Grant took charge.

So it's no proto-*Watchmen*, then – but it is the last gasp of a peculiarly British strand of comic storytelling, one that piled Dickensian misery on blind ballerinas and one-legged footballers, and wallowed in shadow and insurmountable despair. Inky gothic, let's call it. *Monster* positively drips with it.

Moore sets up the mystery: a young boy, a violent father, something awful in a locked attic room. Then we go behind the door: the room holds Uncle Terry, a drooling, pop-eyed Quasimodo with an essentially good heart beneath the boils and the talons. Boy and beast go on the run, corpses and misunderstandings piling up around them as they mix with thugs, flee from cops and, in one gloriously lurid moment, fight a shark. A shark!

Redondo's art has a macabre charm – it's almost sticky with darkness, impossible to imagine in colour – and there's just enough liquorice-black comedy to keep the bleakness at bay.

Nick Setchfield

i Spanish artist Jesus Redondo was a 2000 AD regular, drawing everything from *MACH 1* to *Nemesis The Warlock*.



Children: here's one they made earlier.

HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD

Stage magic



► **OFFICIAL OPENING 30 JULY**

► Venue **Palace Theatre, London**

► Director **John Tiffany**

► Cast **Jamie Parker, Paul Thornley,**

Noma Dumezweni, Poppy Miller,

Alex Price, Anthony Boyle

STAGE PLAY "The truth is a

beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution," sighs Dumbledore in *The Philosopher's Stone*, and it's a sentiment that *The Cursed*

Child's writing team of JK Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany urge people to keep in mind. Arriving with a hashtag that casts Silencio on spoilers (the audience are handed #keepthesecrets pin badges after each show), *The Cursed Child* is an audacious play that will have stunned fans scrolling through PotterPedia, fact-checking every twist and turn of the plot.

Enjoyment of the play doesn't depend on audiences having a

comprehensive understanding of the wizarding world, though. Set 19 years after the events of *The Deathly Hallows*, *The Cursed Child* explores the struggle of a grown-up Harry Potter trying to understand his youngest son, Albus Severus, who's buckling under the weight of the family legacy. By spreading the story across generations of Potters, the play skillfully balances the high expectations of fans as well as giving newcomers a relatable entry point.

There are heaps of heartfelt moments, and not all of them rely on danger. Cute interactions and lines draw cherished characters out of the books, making it feel like the audience is really watching fictional icons take to the stage. For the most part, new characters are portrayed with a similar depth and nuance, their personalities more than strong enough to lay the foundation for further adventures and fanfic. Scorpius Malfoy in particular is sure to become the poster boy for, well, the sort of person Scorpius Malfoy is.

“Will leave devotees desperate to watch it again”

Speaking of fanfic, *The Cursed Child* toys with the *Harry Potter* world so much that it starts to veer in that direction. The type of story being told is one that JK Rowling briefly explored in *Azkaban*, but here it's mined for all it's worth. This results in an occasionally knotty plot which demands that theatregoers pay extremely close attention. It's also the sort of story that might not appear characteristically *Harry Potter* at first. However, this sprawling, wild and dark tale is a worthy entry that lives up to the challenge of returning audiences to Rowling's universe.

The magical world itself is brought to life with inventive set designs, ingenious illusions and stunning special effects, all of which have been crafted with the same care as the work of the actors and writers. The result is a theatrical blockbuster that will leave *Potter* devotees desperate to watch it again, pore over every line, and appreciate every reference until it becomes as familiar as the original seven-part series. **Dom Carter**

i Early previews used real barn owls to deliver a letter. The idea was scrapped after one flew off into the auditorium.



TORCHWOOD: BROKEN

The Boys Are Back In Town

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

60 minutes | CD/download

► Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO DRAMA One of the big puzzles in the first season of *Torchwood* was Ianto's change of heart regarding Jack. At the end of "Cyberwoman" he's filled with hate and rage towards his boss ("One day I'll have the chance to save you and I'll watch you suffer and die!"), but by the end of the series they're in an obvious sexual relationship – so how exactly did Ianto get from A to B? Actor Gareth David-Lloyd says it's his most-asked question from fans, and now this new audio story explores exactly that. Set in the background of the episodes immediately following "Cyberwoman", it deals with just how Ianto comes to terms with his loss as well as his developing role in the team.

It's a job it manages admirably. Big Finish's *Torchwood* range is into its second season now, with a range of stories that have focused on different characters at different points of their development, but this bringing together once again of John Barrowman and David-Lloyd as the fan-favourite couple is something particularly special. The two leads settle back into their roles with gusto, and though the plot is entirely subservient to the character development, you really won't mind. **Rhian Drinkwater**

Also out: a classic *Doctors*/new series box set featuring Weeping Angels, Judoon, Sycorax and Sontarans.



The droids you were looking for?

MIGHTY NO 9

Platform bots

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PS4

► Also on XO, Wii U, 3DS, PS3, 360, PS

Vita, PC

► Publisher Deep Silver

VIDEOGAME This throwback platformer is one of many crowdfunded game reimaginings, reboots and sequels we'll be seeing in the next couple of years. If they all turn out like this we should probably stop Kickstarting things. It's mighty boring, and suffers from more technical issues than you'd expect.

You play Beck, the titular Mighty No 9, whose mission involves saving Mighty Nos 1-8 from their malfunctioning selves. Each has a distinct theme – ice, fire, lightning, ranged attacks, sniping – which dictates the style of the level, and resulting boss battle. Every stage also boasts an army of minions, ranging from simple robots to more complex mini-bosses.

It's a spiritual successor to project lead Keiji Inafune's *Mega Man*, and the similarities are clear: even Beck's design echoes his predecessor's. There's one main

difference, though – he can dash, a mechanic that forms the backbone of the game. Once an enemy is weakened Beck can zip through them, absorbing their "Xel" – an essence that sometimes gives him extra powers.

The Xel buffs aren't very interesting, though. Lives are hard to gain but easy to lose, and you only have two to start with. Given that the jump-shooting is quite fiddly and several obstacles are insta-kill, this can quickly lead to frustration as you're forced to replay a level over and over.

There's definitely an appeal to the retro style, with the game rewarding quick, snappy platforming and testing your ability to locate and target weaknesses with its bosses. But it's hard to shake the feeling that this is just a sub-par *Mega Man* game, and visually it's like something from Rare's Xbox 360 era or an early CGI kids' movie – cartoonish but on the edge of being slightly creepy. Still, for fans, it might be just the ticket – even if it can't live up to the original classics. **Kate Gray**

Beck's name is a gag, as he has a fellow robot buddy called Call. See what they did there?



His brother's the better looking one.

THE TECHNOMANCER

The Waters Of Mars

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PS4

► Also on XO, PC

► Publisher Focus Home Interactive

VIDEOGAME Back in 2013, French studio Spiders pumped out *Mars: War Logs*, a tale of powerful water guilds fighting it out after a century of trouble for the human race on the Red Planet. This is officially a sequel, though it's more like a remake.

You control Zachariah, a Technomancer just learning his trade. These sci-fi mages are a bit like low-grade Jedi, able to control electricity and summon it in attack. Fighting is what you'll be doing most of, with levels guiding you through locked-off section after locked-off section, each populated by scavengers hunting for the planet's resources, or arachnid-like locals. Combat is well balanced – a button-basher this is not.

Less slick are the story elements. Plot progression feels forced, with cut-scenes interrupting gameplay without warning and rarely delivering anything original. Character movement feels equally clunky.

These are relatively small niggles, however. When it comes to gameplay, *The Technomancer* doesn't put a foot far wrong – but that's largely because it takes so few risks. Inoffensive and enjoyable enough for action-RPG fans, but it does far too little to distinguish itself. **Keith Andrew**

Creature designs were inspired by deep-sea animals, as the landscapes brought to mind the ocean floor.



COLLECTABLES

Cluttering up our shelves this month

1 We're not sure if these melamine **Star Wars blueprint plates** (FPI price £8.99; product code D5965) are square because gastropubs have made round ones unfashionable, or simply because that's how things are in a galaxy far, far away. Either way, they're poorly researched kitchenware. Among the seemingly random line

drawings are a couple of glaring factual howlers: no, R2-D2 and C-3PO did not ride an escape pod in *The Empire Strikes Back*, and the Death Star destroyed in *A New Hope* was not the under-construction version. Tut.

2 Hey, what about the Hufflepuffs? Half Moon Bay's range of **Harry**

Potter bowls (FPI price £9.99 each; product codes F3688, F3689, F3690) includes red Gryffindor or green Slytherin designs – deep and chunky, with the house crest on one side and a Quidditch Captain herald on the other. But what about everyone's favourite house of herbologists? Don't they deserve cornflakes too? Ravenclaw are also ignored, but that's okay

because they're nobody's faves. There's also an angular cream and red Hogwarts bowl, which looks like it's best suited to noodles.

3 Tony Stark may be a billionaire industrialist playboy, rocking the latest in hi-tech fashion statements, but beneath that charming armoured exterior is a man who loves his coffee. Well, probably. How else to explain why he's flung the might of Stark Industries' R&D labs into the creation of this **Iron Man travel mug** (FPI price £19.99; product code D3895). Colour-coordinated with Shellhead's livery, it has a 450 ml (16 oz) capacity. Ideal for crafty java hits during superpowered smackdowns.

All products are available at

forbiddenplanet
international
home shopping

www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk
01621 877 222

Reviews



4 Hulk want hot beverage! Pour tea in Hulk's mitt or Hulk smash! This cartoony **Hulk fist mug** (FPI price £9.99; product code F2034) is very amusing – though there are two issues. Firstly, the reverse side features some horribly prominent bulging veins. Secondly, when holding the thing, it's awfully tempting to give someone a jokey thump – this could end badly.

5 Being a super-powered Kryptonian must expedite the business of making boiled eggs for brekkie considerably – there's no hanging around while the water boils, as you just zap it with your heat vision. But a Man of Steel still

needs some way of standing them up, which is where this pair of **Superman egg cups** (FPI price £7.99; product code F3691) comes in. We particularly like the one with a design of Clark ripping his shirt open – maybe you could felt-tip his face on the egg?

6 Funko's cutest vinyl figure range continues with these **Civil War Dorbz** (FPI price £8.49 each; product codes D5609, D5607, D5606, D5603, D5605, D5611, D5604). Lining up here are Crossbones, Black Widow, Black Panther, Captain America, Falcon, Vision and the Winter Soldier. There are also figures of Iron Man and Ant-Man, plus some variants (Crossbones,

for example, also comes with no mask *and* a smashed mask!). No sign of Spider-Man, War Machine, Scarlet Witch or Hawkeye, though. If only the film's makers had also been sensible enough to prune some of the unnecessary heroes...

7 It's difficult to know where to put this **12" Death Star plush** (FPI price £18.99; product code D5942). It can't serve as a novelty cushion because of a little button hidden above the weapons dish: press this and it emits one of three movie samples. Annoyingly, when you cut off the card label it leaves two little holes in the fabric. Hey, Underground Toys, why not attach it to the massive care-advice tag instead? ☹

THINGS TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



DC XXRAY FIGURES
◆ Surely the weirdest vinyl collectables yet? Each 4" figure slices a DC character such as Superman or Batman in half, with one side showing them fully clothed and the other displaying their internal organs. Gross or what?



BATMAN BUST BANK
◆ In the classic 1966 television series, the Caped Crusader pressed a button inside a bust of Shakespeare to send a bookcase sliding back, revealing the Batpoles. The balding bonce of this money bank flips back, just like the TV version.



FACEHUGGER REPLICA
◆ Short of something to cuddle up with at night? Then why not order this lifesize *Aliens* Facehugger – made of foam, it has a bendable tail and is three and a half feet long. Hopefully makers NECA will release a strap-on Chestbuster next.

Photography by Olly Curtis



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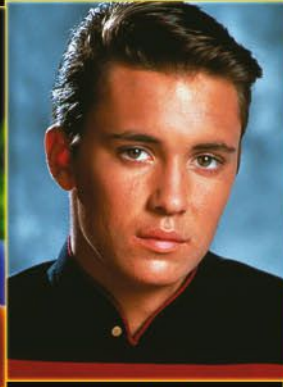
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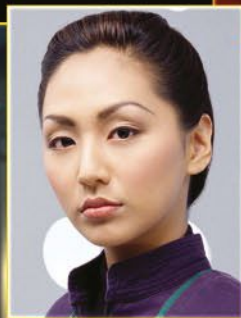
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SEASON 6

"Just promise me you'll ask Brienne on a date."

GAME OF THRONES

Winter's here! Is that why everyone's in a rush?

► **UK Broadcast** Sky Atlantic, finished
► **US Broadcast** HBO, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 6.01-6.10

⚡ **And so the epic quest to steer** clear of spoilers on social media is over for another year, as the show that's redefined watercooler chat wraps up its latest season. With George RR Martin famously still busy on his sixth novel, this was the year the adaptation overtook the source material, meaning that even those who'd read the books were unable to tell people they knew what was coming next.

It's the best thing to happen to the show since Ned Stark's

beheading proved that *everyone* is at the mercy of the gods. Not only is this a journey into entirely virgin territory – this is where the writing team stopped trying to adapt a series of novels, and concentrated on making an amazing, gripping TV show.

Because for all its shocking, compelling brilliance, there's no denying that *Game Of Thrones* has occasionally succumbed to inertia, that tendency to tread water with characters hanging around in one place too long, doing not very much.

However, that's not been the case this year, as season six has accelerated wholeheartedly

towards whatever Westeros's endgame may be – and that denouement may not be all that far away, as showrunners David Benioff and DB Weiss have strongly intimated that there are just 13 hours of the show left.

As soon as the slightly tedious business of bringing Jon Snow back from the dead is out of the way – Worst. Kept. Secret. Ever – season six revels in orchestrating meetings between key characters. Whether it's reunions for Jon and Sansa, Bran and Uncle Benjen, and Jaime and Brienne, or a first meeting between the Greyjoys and Daenerys, there's a sense that the

ZOOM IN



BEST EPISODE ▲

→ Just when we thought it couldn't get bigger than the "Battle Of The Bastards", season finale "The Winds Of Winter" (6.10) steps it up another gear with Cersei's explosive power play.

NITPICK

→ It does sometimes feel like characters travel around at lightspeed, but story editor/writer Bryan Cogman has an explanation: "The timelines of the various story threads don't necessarily match up all the time."

BEST MOMENT

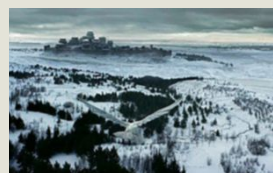
→ Hodor's "Hold The Door" death (6.05) isn't just an instant internet meme – it's utterly heartbreaking, all the more tragic because the gentle giant's demise was always his destiny.

BEST MOMENT 2

→ Or for pure poetic justice, it has to be Ramsay Snow's death by hounds – and Sansa's little grin after letting the dogs out (6.09).

FINALLY! ▼

→ "Winter is coming!" Ned promised back in 2011, and here it is at last. Maybe the Met Office should consider using white ravens on TV?





Daenerys and her dragons: finally heading across the sea...

show's vast number of story threads are finally being pulled together into one coherent story. After years of feeling like lots of different, barely related plotlines spread across a vast map, it now feels like everyone exists in the same world – and your patience for soldiering on through the slow bits (and many moments of misery) is being rewarded with some of the most exciting, breakneck TV the show has ever produced.

Visually *GoT* is bigger than ever before, so it's remarkable the characters aren't crushed under the weight of spectacle. Sure, the brutal Battle of the Bastards and Cersei's clinical wildfire assault on King's Landing are the bits that'll be talked about (and rightly so), but the bits that linger in the memory are rather quieter, more intimate: Jaime and Brienne rekindling their friendship, while both knowing they'll kill the other if they need to; playful, flirty glances between Yara Greyjoy and Daenerys; even the taciturn Hound is humanised by his friendship with Ian McShane's sadly short-lived Septon Ray.

“Some of the most exciting TV the show has produced”

It's also refreshing that the show isn't saving all its big reveals until the end – we now know the origins of the White Walkers, the tragic reason for Hodor's limited vocabulary and even Jon Snow's parentage (so he's part Stark, part Targaryen – that's going to be interesting...). So with Snow in Winterfell, Cersei in King's Landing, Daenerys on her way from Essos and the Night King crushing all before him up north, we make that at least four monarchs in play. Who will win? We can't wait to find out – though our fingers are crossed that season six hasn't upped the pace so much that there's not enough story left to tell. **Richard Edwards**



Not looking so smug by the end of the episode. Tee hee.

★ BEST IN SHOW ★

The characters who make TV great



HARRISON WELLS

The *Flash*'s reboot of Harrison Wells created a curmudgeonly genius... and a classic double act

► UK Broadcast Sky 1, finished ► US Broadcast The CW, finished

🔗 **The gamechanging** cliffhanger at the end of *The Flash* season two – with Barry travelling back in time to save his mother – promises great things for season three, but also presents one major concern: with the subsequent changes to the timeline, are we going to get yet another version of Harrison Wells?

We've already had one change. In season one he was actually evil speedster Eobard Thawne (aka Reverse-Flash) disguised in a Wells skin suit. As the show's resident evil genius he was driven and ruthless but with a hint of melancholy. In season two we were introduced to Earth-2's version of Wells, and the change in the character was a masterstroke.

Why? Well, it would have been so easy simply to make a “nice” Wells to contrast with Thawne-Wells. Instead they made him grumpy, self-centred, short-tempered and witheringly sarcastic. Tom

Cavanagh took that and ran with it to produce one of TV's greatest curmudgeons; Steve Jobs meets Victor Meldrew.

For the first two-thirds of the season he was TV sci-fi's most watchable anti-hero since *Blake's Seven*'s Avon, forced into being a good guy but making sure everybody knew exactly how much personal pain he was enduring in the process. His undisguised contempt for Jay – his world's Flash – was refreshing at a point when everybody else was fawning over the phoney hero.

Later in the season he softened but his competitive and combative relationship with Cisco remained. They formed a hugely entertaining sparky double act with inventive insults flying back and forth, but all the time you knew Wells loved the guy like a son.

So please come back next season, Earth-2 Wells. We don't want another timey-wimey variant. **Dave Golder**

Don't touch, the universe will explode!



SEASON 4

ORPHAN BLACK

This penultimate season is a doozy

► **UK Broadcast** Netflix, finished
► **US Broadcast** BBC America, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 4.01-4.10

◉ **When we reviewed *Orphan Black*** *Black*'s third season in Viewscreen one year ago, we mentioned that the show had perhaps steered too much into dark territory, thus contrasting badly with its more comedic elements. We hoped this would be fixed in time for season four. Were our hopes realised?

The answer's a resounding yes. Tonally this year has been absolutely spot-on, able to juggle grim scenes of stinky dead bodies being exhumed with the Hendrixes having phone sex; maggot-bots being dug out of victims' cheeks with a pregnant Helena complaining about farting too much. There's no whiplash, no

jolts: everything fits together seamlessly. This is probably the most assured season of *Orphan Black* since it began.

Fittingly, given that we just said that, we also start season four with a flashback to the life of Beth Childs – the cop whose suicide originally set her clone, Sarah, on the path to finding all her sisters and fighting the Powers That Be. While it's tempting to wish we could be introduced to more new clones instead (although dippy Krystal does pop up again, which is great, and a clone named MK also debuts), it's fascinating seeing how Beth was driven to end her life after a landslide of crap lands in her lap. And it's pertinent, too, as the rest of the clones have to climb that landslide as the season progresses, investigating a

gene-tampering organisation. While last season enjoyed a grungy military subplot, this time we get the gleaming world of science and an array of clinical, whip-smart villains, who bring us twists and turns that veer from nail-biting to tragic.

But, as always, the focus of the show is Tatiana Maslany's extraordinary performance as Sarah, Cosima, Alison, Helena, Rachel and company, and, as ever, she does us proud. Each clone gets a meaty storyline this year – although Helena could perhaps have been used more – and the result is just as compelling and believable as ever.

Season five, which airs in 2017, will be *Orphan Black*'s last... and if it's as good as this year, it'll be going out on a high. **Jayne Nelson**

ZOOM IN



BEST MOMENT ▲

→ A montage of Alison playing Judas in a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* (4.08), while a life-or-death blackmail plot goes down elsewhere. Truly surreal.

TRIVIA

→ After a season spent playing various Castor clones – who all ended up dead – the excellent Ari Millen stays in the main cast list, playing another clone entirely.

BEST EPISODE

→ "The Scandal Of Altruism" (4.06) is a masterpiece of double deals, double-crosses and, of course, given that this is a clone show, doubles.

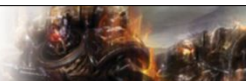
TRIVIA

→ Tatiana Maslany has played a whopping 11 different characters in the show – how does she keep track?

NEED TO KNOW ▼

→ This year's new clone is Mika, aka MK, who has clearly been inspired by Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. She also has a very bad fringe.





LINE UP

The month's most quotable dialogue

CASSIDY

"He's walking the earth with a face like an arsehole. He should have tried heroin."

Preacher,
Episode 1.02



CLAIRE

"I'm reasonably sure that you don't have a heart."

Outlander,
EPISODE 2.11



DUKE OF SANDRINGHAM

"You've always known that in my heart, I am a Jacobite."



THE HOUND

"You're shit at dying, you know that?"

Game Of Thrones,
Episode 6.08

DR SEWARD

"I'm a New Yorker, Sir Malcolm. We know our way round random gunplay."

Penny Dreadful,
Episode 3.09



ALISON

"What can we do, Sarah? I have the runs but I'm packing heat!"

Orphan Black,
Episode 4.10



SCRIPT EASE

A TV season distilled

SEASON 2

OUTLANDER

Mac To The Future,
Part Deux

► UK Broadcast Amazon Prime, finished

► US Broadcast Starz, finished

► Episodes Reviewed 2.01-2.12



Scotland, 1948.
CLAIRE runs down a road in an 18th century dress, pregnant.

CLAIRE
Culloden! Culloden!
Who won at Culloden?

SCOTTISH EXTRA
Och, ye're just rubbing it in, sassenach.

CLAIRE
Then I didn't change history!

SCOTTISH EXTRA
Spoilers!

Flashback: Le Harve, 1745.

JAMIE
I'm nae convinced asking Scotsmen to lose a fight against the English is a good idea.

CLAIRE
Well, no. There's a simpler way. You go to Paris, become a top wine merchant, make the right friends and convince Prince Charlie not to fund the Jacobite rebellion.

Paris, 1746, a bedroom

JAMIE
I've made all the right friends at court.

CLAIRE
Have you convinced the Prince not to fund the rebellion?

JAMIE
No, but we had a great time at a whore house.

Paris, 1746. Versailles.

CLAIRE
There's Black Jack Randall!

JAMIE
Where?

CLAIRE
Over there. Bugging a kitten. You must not kill him, Jamie. He's my 20th century's husband's ancestor.

JAMIE
Hang on, so making one *small* change to history is bad but changing the outcome of Culloden is good?

JACK

Hello Jamie. Arse still sore?

JAMIE
I challenge you to a duel.

CLAIRE
Jamie no!

JAMIE
Don't worry. Think of the make up sex!

JACK
I accept the duel. Ouch, you've cut my balls off.

A muddy field, 1746.

CLAIRE
How do we prevent Culloden now?

JAMIE
We don't. We join the Jacobite army and help them win it!

CLAIRE and JAMIE join the Jacobites. Lots of old friends die or get killed. CLAIRE and JAMIE have lots of sex. Nothing alters the inexorable march towards Culloden.

JACK

Hello again. Excuse me while I punch the dead body of my brother.

CLAIRE
That's the most human thing you've done in two seasons.

JACK
Do you still predict I shall die at Culloden?

CLAIRE
Sweet F-all we've done has changed history. You might as well marry my friend Mary because I know she'll only have to put up with you for a couple of days.

JACK
I'd rather have Jamie.

CLAIRE
Don't even go there.

JACK
So the whole season has been pointless?

CLAIRE
Well, I did get lots of break-up sex and a new baby.

Dave Golder

And now our chaps
face the deadly threat
of the giant Xs...



SEASON 5

PERSON OF INTEREST

Goodbye to the Machine

► **UK Broadcast** Channel 5, TBC
► **US Broadcast** CBS, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 5.01-5.12

It seemed to take forever for season five of *Person Of Interest* to hit US screens, with CBS ignoring it for an entire year before declaring this the final season... which they then apparently scheduled by blindfolding themselves and throwing darts at a calendar. (We're still waiting to see it in the UK.)

Still, it's aired. And now it's over. What began as a fairly simple crime show mutated into one of the finest science fiction series in years, incorporating – and often predicting – real-life events with its storylines about surveillance and corruption. You have to wonder if Edward Snowden ever

watched it and nodded along as he saw his life played out on network television, except with the help of a few former CIA assassins and a Belgian dog named Bear who only answers Dutch commands.

As for this year – well, it's an odd one. It begins with the Machine a shadow of its former self in a tiny briefcase, as Finch and Root try to restore it to its former glory. Meanwhile their colleague and friend, Shaw, is being held by Samaritan's goons and the end of the world appears to be nigh... for humans, at least. The aforementioned "oddness" comes from watching the show's long-held team dynamics shift; Jim Caviezel's John Reese has always been front-and-centre, but here he seems to blend into the background as both Root and

Shaw get the spotlight and then, later, Finch. This isn't a bad thing, and *Person Of Interest* has always been an ensemble piece, but you do find yourself wondering if Caviezel was a bit miffed by it all.

Elsewhere there are some lovely nods to previous loose threads, shocking plot twists and action scenes that are a cut above what the show has ever done before – indeed, you'll be left wondering if the streets of New York are still vibrating from all the gunshots.

Person Of Interest was always destined to go out on a high. It's just a shame that CBS lost so much momentum by benching it for a year and then burning through the final episodes as though they were ashamed of them. Definitely *not* the work of a good samaritan.

Jayne Nelson

ZOOM IN



BEST EPISODE ▲

→ Shaw escapes from her captors in "6,741" (5.04). "It's going to blow everyone away," said showrunner Jonathan Nolan. He's right.

BEST MOMENT

→ In "The Day The World Went Away" (5.10) Finch's number finally comes up. The title comes from a Nine Inch Nails song that plays over the gut-wrenching final seconds...

TRIVIA

→ The opening credits, which have changed over the years according to what's going on with the Machine, are now an even split between it and Samaritan. Both Finch and bad guy Greer narrate.

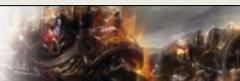
BEST DIALOGUE

→ Root, to Shaw: "Listen, all I'm saying is that if we're just information, just noise in the system... We might as well be a symphony."

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

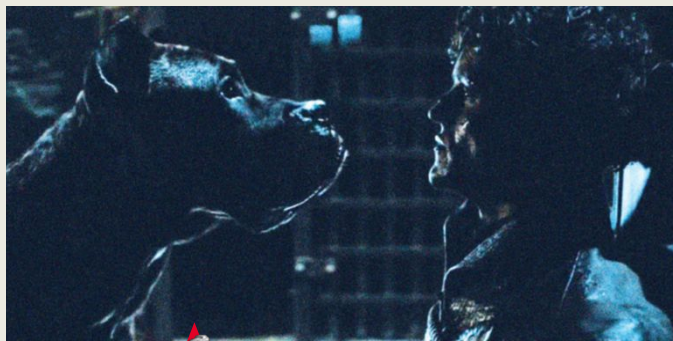
→ In 5.12, "exe", Reese and Shaw rifle through an NSA evidence locker and we see they find Edward Snowden's wireless router.





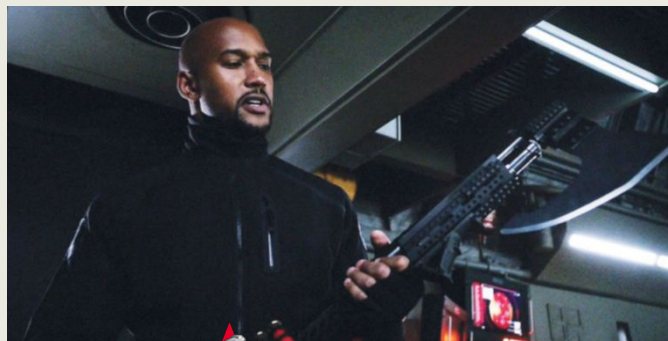
SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



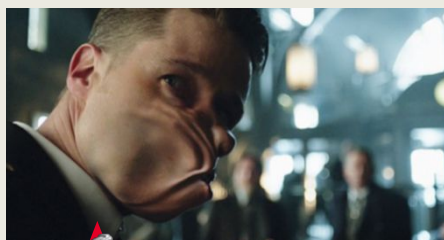
SCOOBY SNACKS OF THE MONTH

When Ramsay got his comeuppance in *Game Of Thrones*, for a second we thought the dog was going to rip his mask off to reveal Old Man Withers.



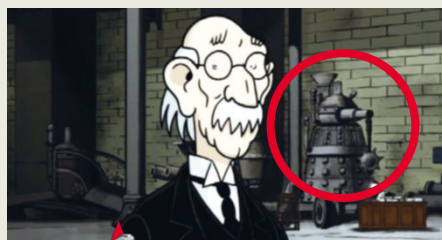
WEAPON OF THE MONTH

Mack takes the spork to extremes in Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD*. What do you call that, then? A knife, perhaps?



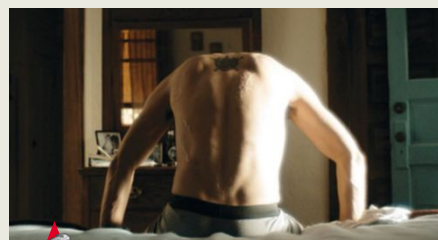
CROSSOVER OF THE MONTH

Gotham and *Preacher* are both DC but we weren't expecting Arseface so soon on the Batman show!



CAMEO OF THE MONTH

The last place we expected to see a Dalek was in French animated film *April And The Extraordinary World*.



WORZEL GUMMIDGE OF THE MONTH

Jesse Custer wakes up in the *Preacher* pilot wondering which head to put on today. Just a mildly pissed off head?



AUDITION OF THE MONTH

With *Orphan Black*'s season coming to an end Tatiana Maslany wonders if *Arrow* has room for another archer character with a Davy Crockett gimmick.



RETRIBUTION OF THE MONTH

Somebody's stolen Dougal and his mates' soap out of the shower and they're not going to rest until they find out who in *Outlander*.



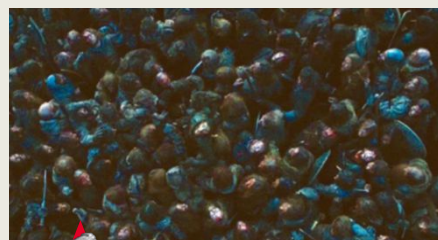
BUDGET CUTS OF THE MONTH

Cheap FX slammed in new *Clangers* (*The Living And The Dead*).



SECURITY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MONTH

Best bicycle lock ever in *Outcast*.



PICTURE PUZZLE OF THE MONTH

Where's Wally, Westeros-style.

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RON PERLMAN
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JACK GLEESON
GAME OF THRONES

CARL WEATHERS
PREDATOR, ROCKY

FAMKE JANSSEN
X-MEN, JAMES BOND

ADAM "EDGE" COPELAND
HAVEN, WRESTLER

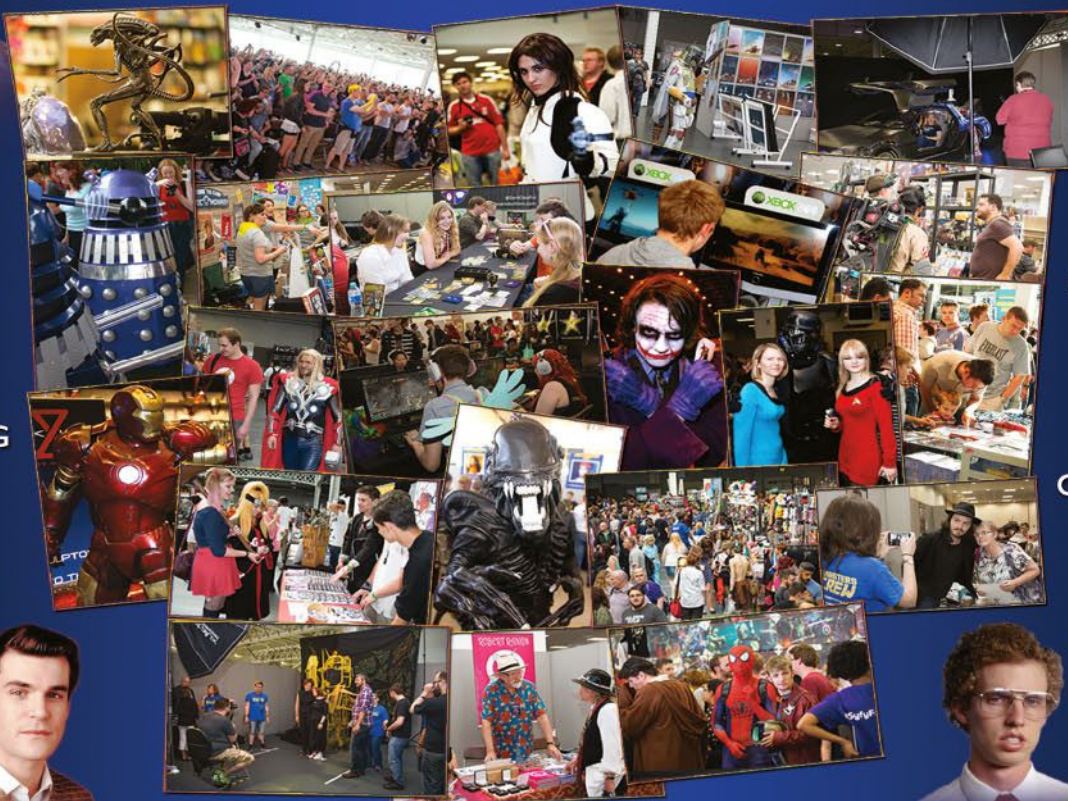
MICHELLE GOMEZ
DR WHO, GOTHAM

RUTGER HAUER
BLADE RUNNER

DOLPH LUNDGREN
ROCKY IV, JAMES BOND

AUTOGRAPHS
PHOTO SHOTS
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DEATH!

When the Grim Reaper came a-calling, were you paying attention?

Quizmaster: Russell Lewin, Production Editor

QUESTION 1 PICTURE QUESTION

Name the film about the alien serial killer, and the star.

QUESTION 2

In the comics' *Death Of Superman*, in whose arms does Superman die?

QUESTION 3

In the original *Star Trek* TV show, 59 crew members were killed. How many were redshirts? (Within five gets a point.)

QUESTION 4

Which broadcaster complained on Twitter about the *Radio Times* spoiling it for him regarding Han Solo's fate in *The Force Awakens*?

QUESTION 5 PICTURE QUESTION

Name the film and its director.

QUESTION 6

How many times did Rory "die" in *Doctor Who*?

QUESTION 7 PICTURE QUESTION

How does Robert Patrick's T-1000 finally expire?

QUESTION 8

Which major character dies – properly – in the acclaimed comic *Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man* #107?

QUESTION 9

Which *Grange Hill* teacher did Darth Vader kill?

QUESTION 10

And which *Blue Peter* presenter buys the farm in *Flash Gordon* (1980)?



QUESTION 1



QUESTION 5



QUESTION 7



QUESTION 15

QUESTION 11

"It was beauty killed the beast." Who says this in the original *King Kong*?

QUESTION 12

In the script of this Ridley Scott film it just said "this thing emerges". What thing?

QUESTION 13

"This issue: Everybody Dies!" Which Marvel title had this as a cover line in 1981?

QUESTION 14

Which John Carpenter film has the following sorts of demises: shot in head; blown up by grenade; axed; burned to death with a flare.



QUESTION 15 PICTURE QUESTION

Who is meeting their untimely demise here, in what?

QUESTION 16

What BBC series ended on 21 December 1981, apparently with the deaths of most of the lead characters?

QUESTION 17

Bullseye and Elektra battled to the death in *Daredevil* #181. Who lost?

QUESTION 18

True or false: in America you can buy a candle entitled the Melting Toht Candle, based on the Nazi's grisly death scene in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

QUESTION 19

"Oh god! Oh Jesus Christ!" Who's about to be sacrificed?

QUESTION 20

What sci-fi related shrine in Cardiff has its very own TripAdvisor page?

Answers
1 Under The Skin, Scarlett Johansson
2 Lois Lane 3 43 (73%) 4 Charlie
Brooker 5 Scanners, David
Cronenberg 6 Six 7 He topples into
molten steel 8 Jean DeWolff 9 Mr
Bronson (actor Michael Sheard, who
played Admiral Ozzel in The Empire
Strikes Back) 10 Peter Duncan 11 Carl
Denham, played by Robert
Armstrong 12 The chestburster from
John Hurt in Alien 13 The Uncanny
X-Men 14 The Thing 15 Paul
McCrane's Emil Antonowsky in
RoboCop 16 Blake's 7 17 Elektra 18
True 19 Edward Woodward in The
Wicker Man 20 Ianto's (Torchwood)

How did you do?

Which death-related film are you, dear reader?



→ 0-5
Dracula: Dead And Loving It



→ 6-10
Hawk The Slayer



→ 11-15
Die Another Day



→ 16-19
Deadpool



→ 20
Dawn Of The Dead (1978)

Total Recall

Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



Photography by Olly Curtis

TEN YEARS OF TERROR

Russell Lewin, Production Editor

It probably isn't the case nowadays, but back in the day factual film books could play a big part in nurturing a love of the movies. My generation had no internet (thankfully), so the likes of Alan Frank's *Horror Films* and Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic Encyclopedia Of Film* fired us up and, in some cases, changed us forever.

Initially I borrowed film books from the local library and later bought lots, but one that came along in 2001, after my formative period had passed, is my favourite: *Ten Years Of Terror: British Horror Films Of The 1970s* by David Flint and Harvey Fenton; I consider it the best book ever written on British horror films. Back in the day, some magazine called *SFX* awarded it five stars in its review.

I'd long loved 1970s Brit horror (I actually have a strange predilection for any '70s British films), so I knew this book was for me. Many of the films had given me enormous delight in the '80s on late-night television – illicit after-dark viewings of, say, *And Soon The Darkness*, *Assault*, *Incense For The Damned* or *Revenge*.

There are great films discussed in the book, and awful ones, but, hey, they're all from that wondrous, inflation-wrecked, titillating, brown,



strike-ridden decade that I'll always adore. All Hammer horrors are present, obviously, along with the likes of Amicus's, Pete Walker's and Norman J Warren's. Well known, fairly mainstream films covered include *The Wicker Man*, *Alien*, *The Devils*, Polanski's *Macbeth* and Hitchcock's *Frenzy*.

Ten Years Of Terror (great title!) features top quality film criticism with scores of superb photographs, lurid, sexy '70s promotional artwork that would make your average member of generation snowflake fall out their chair, and bags of interesting info.

Agonisingly, I've seen all but two of the 143 films listed. Which pair am I missing, I hear you cry. *Whispers Of Fear* and *Face Of Darkness* (both 1976), two ultra obscurities that have never been on television or released on video or DVD. (If you are a DVD company, PLEASE get the rights and release them! MY MONEY WILL BE YOURS!)

What's great is that anytime I rewatch one of the films covered I go back to these pages and enjoy the reviews afresh. My purchase has become a sort of living treasure. ●

Russell, sadly, doesn't have much interest in modern British horror films.

FactAttack!

→ As the decade goes on films decline in number; 1970 has 24 films, 1979 has five. The decline of our film industry in the '70s is laid bare.

→ The paperback edition of this book set me back £24.99 in 2001, but copies are currently going for £160 on Amazon. Hardbacks are £295!

→ There are a few misfires: the portentous *Don't Look Now* essay is bizarre; the inclusion of *A Clockwork Orange* and *Straw Dogs* is daft.

→ Most of the reviews are rewritten versions of ones that appeared in the excellent sex & horror fanzine *Flesh & Blood* (which I own all of!).

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17 AUG
DETAILS ON
PAGE 39

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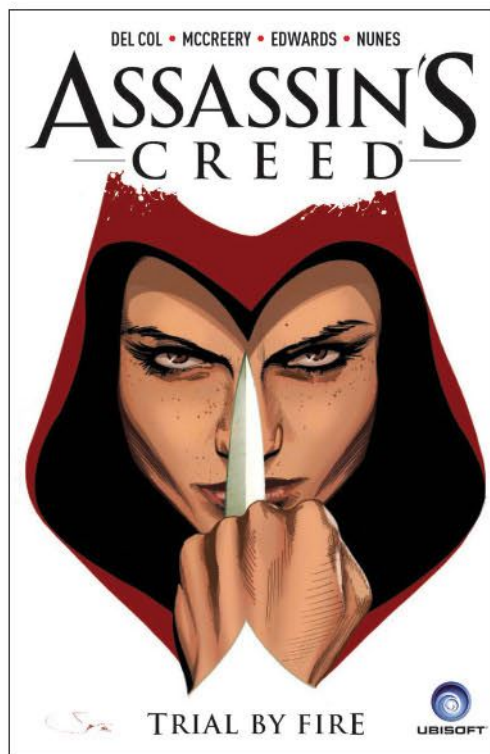
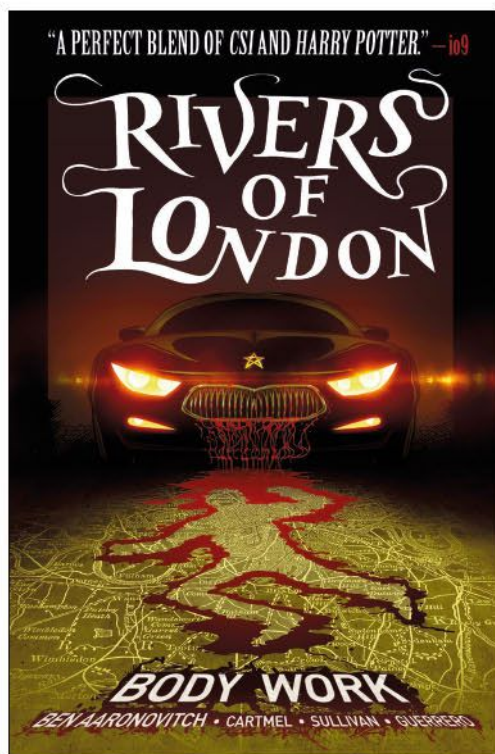
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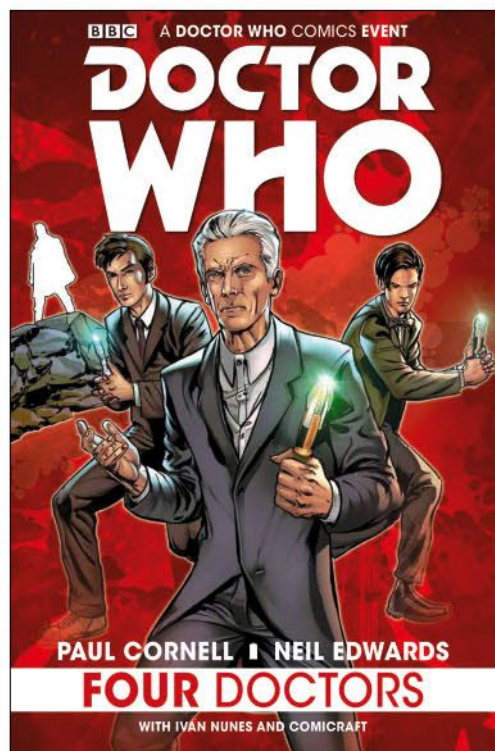
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